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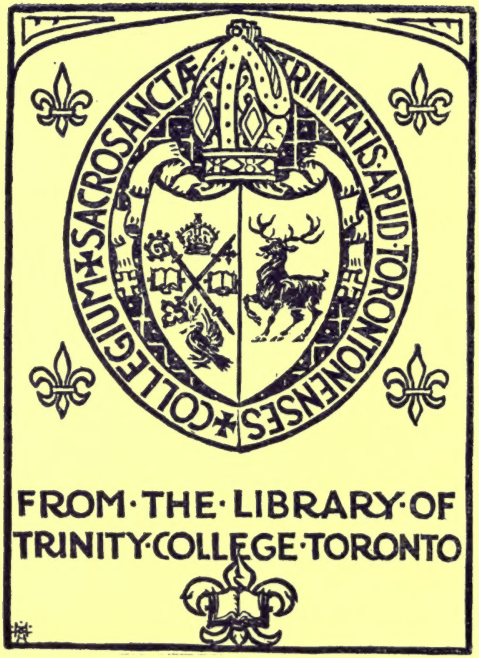
Her Life and Work



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MARY SUMNER

Her Life and Work

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MARY SUMNER
Her Life and Work

Part I.—Memoir of Mrs. Sumner
By MARY PORTER

Part II.—A Short History of the Mothers' Union
By MARY WOODWARD

Compiled from the manuscript History of the Society written by the
LADY HORATIA ERSKINE

WINCHESTER: WARREN & SON LIMITED
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FOREWORD

By The Archbishop of Canterbury

THE Archbishop of Canterbury permits the use, as Foreword to Mrs. Sumner's Biography, of the following passage from a letter which he wrote to Mrs. Gore Browne at the time of her mother's death:—

"What a wonderful life it has been! Few of those who realise the work of her later years know or remember how early she began to have large responsibilities, and a central position wherein her charm carried so much before it. How gallantly she has borne a yet greater burden in the after-years—but with the self-same charm—everyone knows. Her praise is deservedly 'in all the Churches.'

Do you remember how Stanley, in describing Moses on Pisgah, applies the lines about people seldom seeing the *fruit* of their labours?

> 'For life did never to one man allow
> Time to discover worlds, and conquer, too.'

But life has allowed it to one *woman*! It is a marvellous experience to have first 'discovered' a new way of dealing with home problems, and stirring people thereto; and *then* to have lived to see it all come true, all the world over, under her ripe experience!"

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO PART I

I CANNOT let this Memoir go out under my name without some acknowledgment of the very large share in it which is due to my fellow-workers in the Mothers' Union. We have all joined together in contributing what each has had to give towards making a picture of Mrs. Sumner's life and work that shall be true, so far as it goes. That it should be incomplete is, I fear, inevitable, especially within the somewhat narrow limits of this volume. But it has seemed fitting that our memories of one so widely known and loved and honoured should be presented in the simplest and least costly form we could accomplish.

Where so many helpers have contributed to the result achieved, to give a list of those to whom thanks are due would be lengthy, and probably incomplete. I have therefore not attempted it, nor have I given, except on a few important occasions, the names of the correspondents who have kindly furnished the various letters of Mrs. Sumner's from which I am able to quote. In some cases it was not desired, and, for the most part, it would have made an interruption without adding to the significance of the passages given.

One name, however, must have the recognition due to it in at least equal measure with my own, in the authorship of this Memoir. It was at the request of Mrs. Gore Browne that I undertook the task, and without her constant and close co-operation I could not have carried it through. That I have done so, even with her help, very imperfectly, no one can be more fully aware than I am, for the more closely one looks into the depths which underlay that life of power and beauty, the clearer grows the consciousness of inadequacy in portrayal. But the stronger, also, grows one's faith in the power of the Holy Spirit to make use, if He will, even of this brief record of Mary Sumner's life and work, for the purpose of kindling in other hearts fresh confidence in the Lord she loved, and a more burning zeal for His service.

That such may be His gracious work is the prayer with which this book goes forth.

MARY PORTER.

All Saints' Day, 1921.

PART I

MEMOIR OF MRS. SUMNER

Chapter I

HARVEST

"In the pleasant orchard closes,
'God bless all our gains' say we;
But, 'May God bless all our losses'
Better suits with our degree."
("*The Lost Bower.*")

THE 15th of August, 1921, witnessed a gathering in Winchester Cathedral most truly to be described as a Harvest Thanksgiving. The whole of that vast church—chancel, nave and aisles—was filled to overflowing, chiefly with women, old and young, rich and poor, who had come from far and near to thank God for the rich harvest of a long life in which the sunshine of His love had been allowed to do its fruitful work.

Thankfulness; that was the keynote of Mrs. Sumner's funeral, even in hearts aching with the pain of personal loss. Her place was left very empty in the home from which her coffin was borne, as the field is empty whence the golden corn has all been carried. But the bareness of the reaped furrow does not silence the joy of harvest, and neither can the desolation of heart and home quench the thanksgiving of those who look forward as well as back, to the Lord of the Harvest's own in-gathering of the ripened sheaves.

Those sheaves were symbolised at the service in Winchester Cathedral on that sunny August afternoon. The 4000 and more women assembled there were representative of the whole 400,000 members of the Mothers' Union in all parts of the world, and as the funeral procession passed through their midst, the words that

rose to many a mind were: "Behold, I and the children whom Thou hast given me."

It was as the *Mother*, far more than only as the *Founder* of the Mothers' Union that its members thanked God for her life, and for her work, and, above all—as one of them wrote—for "that great big mother-heart which seemed to enfold us all, and to take to itself all our joys and sorrows, as if they were her own."

It was as a Mother that the members of her world-wide Union did indeed "rise up and call her blessed" on that golden day of harvest; but it was as a leader also that she was honoured by the leaders of the Church she had served with so full a consecration of her powers. The two buttresses of the Cathedral which bear her name and her husband's fitly commemorate the support and strength given to the life of the Church in the Nation, by countless efforts and sacrifices freely given and wisely planned through long years of unstinted service to God and man.

If we would enter fully into the joy of harvest, we must know something of what has gone before; of the sowing as well as the reaping, of the toil and patience, and the trustful waiting upon God, which have all had their part in preparing for the glory of the gathered sheaves. Each different harvest has its own preparation. For some the buffeting of storms would seem to be needful, or long watering with bitter tears, whilst others attain their full fruition in the peace of glowing sunshine.

Such was the harvest of Mary Sumner's life. If I had to give in a single phrase the secret of its fruitfulness, I think I should choose the two words, *sunshine* and *service*. Her 92 years were exceptionally rich in sunshine, and she took it as God's gift, and used it to the full. Or rather, I think it would be truer to say that she suffered

Him to use it, in her and through her, for the fulfilment of His will; not hindering its transforming, ripening work by self-cast shadows, nor seeking merely the pleasure of basking in its glow. The sorrows which the passing of the years must always bring came to her gently, and in due course. No anguish of bitter suffering or untimely loss darkened the heaven above her, or shook the foundations of her faith. Personal beauty and gifts were hers in rich abundance; love, friendship and appreciation surrounded her from her first days to her last. God did indeed give her "all things richly to enjoy," not for her own sake only, but for the work He had prepared for her to accomplish in His Name.

Looking back upon that work, in the golden light of harvest, we can see how essential to its fulfilment were the confidence and serenity, the tact and courage and all the personal charm called forth in such abundant measure by the sheltered happiness of her girlhood's days, the deeper joys of wedded love and motherhood, the wide circle of friends, and all the varied interests and opportunities that enriched her life. She had only three real homes in all its course; Hope End, her childhood's paradise of delight and dreams, from which she went forth in the summer brightness of her bridal day; the Hampshire Rectory where her own children grew up, and whence they in their turn passed on to homes of their own; and the old house at Winchester, where the Mothers' Union—her "youngest child" as her husband called it—passed through the first stages of the rapid growth which fitted it to go out from the Cathedral Close "into all the world."

With these three homes are linked three distinct stages in the development of Mary Sumner's life and work.

Chapter II

HOPE END

(1828—1848)

"Green the land is, where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played,
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade:
Summer snow of apple-blossoms running up from glade to glade.

"Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise,
Close as brother leans to brother
When they press beneath the eyes
Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of paradise.

"While beyond, above them mounted,
And above their woods also,
Malvern hills, for mountains counted
Not unduly, loom a-row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions through the sunshine and the snow."

THE stanzas are from Mrs. Browning's poem, "The Lost Bower," in which she has enshrined the memory of that beautiful home which was for her, as afterwards for Mrs. Sumner, the paradise of childhood's years. Hope End would seem to be one of those places which take hold of the hearts of all who live in them; the reason, in this case, being the rich variety of its many charms. Upland slopes and wooded glades, open park, walled gardens, and shady lawns, all were to be found at Hope End, with wonderful views here and there, where the ground was high, across Herefordshire to the far Welsh Hills, in one direction, and, in another, to the nearer Malvern range.

In this home of many beauties Elizabeth Barrett spent her girlhood, and wrote her earliest poems, and

Hope End

from it she departed with bitter grief in her 28th year, when her father was forced, through loss of fortune, to sell the estate. He found a ready purchaser in Mr. Heywood, Mrs. Sumner's father, who had fallen in love with the place on a visit paid to it once when he was staying at Malvern.

The move to Hope End was made in 1833 from Swinton, near Manchester, where Mr. Heywood and his wife were then living, and where their three children had been born. Mary Elizabeth, the youngest of the three, was then in her fifth year, and as time went on there gradually grew up in her childish mind a strangely vivid sense of sympathy with her predecessor in this delightful new home, who shared her fondness for it, and also one of her own names. The remembrance was fresh in her mind sixty years later, when she wrote down some memories of her young days, from which I am allowed to quote:—

"I was four years old when we went to Hope End; the baby of the family, and a much-indulged person—though I never remember disobeying my parents. Such a course seemed to be made impossible by the high standard of conduct they always set us, and their example of high principle as regards obedience, truth and honour.

"My first recollection of the new home which became so unspeakably dear to us all was the account given by some of the old servants, of Elizabeth Barrett's agony of grief and her bitter tears, in driving away from Hope End. I felt so sorry for her, and I guarded, with a sort of loyal sympathy, her favourite flowers in her little garden up by the large walled kitchen garden, and thought how too happy I was to live in such a lovely home while she was pining somewhere far away."

In this beautiful home Mary Heywood passed a girlhood that was not only very happy, but was also

characterised by an amount of freedom, and a wealth of varied opportunities, which a girl even of the present age might well envy her. It is perhaps rather wholesome for us, in these days which claim to have left the poor old past so far behind, to realise how wide a life and training could be opened to a girl, nearly a century ago, by parents who spent themselves, as well as their means, freely upon their children's upbringing.

Mr. Heywood was a man of wide culture, a great reader and a scholarly writer, and "as children we were taught a great deal by him," Mrs. Sumner's notes tell us.

". . . . And if we drove or walked with him, he used to tell us long historical stories so graphically that I felt as if I had assisted personally at the battles of Crecy and Agincourt, talked to the Black Prince, and seen the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo. . . . .

". . . . My father and mother both took immense pains in our education. We had foreign governesses, and went abroad constantly, in days when travelling could only be accomplished slowly, and with long weary days of posting."

Those lengthy drives Mrs. Sumner owned that she found "very dull work," with the "dust, heat, monotony, and the perpetual jingling of the horses' bells."

"Oh, I did feel tired and dreadfully bored!" she frankly admitted; whereat one wonders the less on reading that she was only seven years old when the first of these journeys abroad took place. And a good deal would seem to have been expected of her, too!

"My father wished us each to write a journal, and I can recall my first journal-book, with the big round-hand recording with difficulty and exceeding dulness small details of no interest."

One winter was spent in France, and one in Germany, and then the education of the two sisters was carried

on at home, and the boy went off to school, "much to my grief," Mrs. Sumner wrote, "for he and I were such devoted friends."

"We had each of us our ponies at Hope End, and our joy was to gallop about the park together, leaping ditches and flying over fences, often without saddles. Tom taught me to ride, and considered me his pupil. My father's hair stood somewhat on end one day at the wild career over hedge and ditch which my brother led me, ending with the triumphant announcement to my father, when we drew rein: 'That is how I teach girls!'

"Tom was a first-rate rider from his boyhood, and knew no fear, so I was bound to try and follow suit on my pony 'Strawberry.' He and I used also to row about together on the lake below the house in a sort of a tub, which we called the 'Happy-go-lucky.'"

The close bond of comradeship with this beloved only brother was never loosened. "Tom's" daughter, Mrs. Cartwright, cherishes the memory of days long after, when brother and sister loved to meet again in the old home, and their laughter would ring out as merrily as though they were still boy and girl together, as they called up the memories of past adventures and exploits.

All through Mrs. Sumner's recollections of her childish days there runs the golden thread of her mother's influence, to which she loved to say that she owed so much more than could be told in words.

"Concerning my dear mother I feel it more difficult to write. She was the 'Angel in the house' to us all .... She gave herself up in heart and life to the service of Jesus Christ, and her teaching and example made a lasting impression upon her husband and children. She lived to hear, long years afterwards, the whispered words of her husband as he was dying: 'We shall soon meet again;

you brought me to know and love my Saviour. It is all your doing that I die in peace.' "

A phrase which Mrs. Sumner uses about her mother is strikingly appropriate to herself: "There was no *parenthesis* in her religion. It moulded her whole tone of thought and manner of life."

So also are the words that follow:—

"I do not think there ever was a more entirely lovable or fascinating personality. It is certain that she had the power of winning people of all sorts and kinds, rich and poor, by her tender sympathy, her charm of manner, her cleverness and humour, and her quick appreciation of all that was good and interesting in those who approached her."

Daily Bible-reading with this beloved mother, in the early morning, was one of Mrs. Sumner's earliest and most constant recollections, and "what a debt of gratitude we owe her for this! It has helped us through life, for what is learnt in childhood is never forgotten."

The last words strike a familiar echo in the memory of every one who has heard the Foundress of the Mothers' Union speak of its chief work, the training of children in the knowledge and love of God. The paramount importance of early training—above all, of a mother's training—was, to the end, the thought of all others which she strove to impress upon all who would join with her in the great work for which the first foundations were laid in those quiet morning half-hours spent with her own mother in learning to know and love God.

So the sunny days of childhood passed by, and the dawn of womanhood found Mary Heywood one of the brightest, happiest, and—if one may add it—most sought-after girls who have ever tasted of life's keenest joys. A portrait of her, at about this time, shows something of

her dark-haired, brilliant beauty, but it can only faintly suggest the vitality and the radiant joyousness which those who knew her best would always dwell upon as her chief characteristics. She is fond of insisting, in her reminiscences, upon her sister's superior beauty, but not all her depreciation of her own attractions can quite disguise the sunshine of love and admiration which then, as in later years, followed her wherever she went. The manuscript stops short very soon after her 18th birthday, giving just one glimpse of her "coming-out" winter in Rome, where she went to her first ball on New Year's Day, 1847.

"It was then that my future husband first saw me (Mr. George Sumner), but we were not introduced to one another. A few days later we met at the house of his cousin, Mrs. Wilson, the daughter of Archbishop Sumner. She told him he would meet the two Miss Heywoods, but that he must not fall in love with either, because one was engaged to her cousin, Percival Heywood, and the second was too young to think of being married—in fact, that her parents would not hear of such a thing. This caution was singularly disregarded as time went on."

Full of enjoyment are the memories of that winter, which was "delightfully spent in lionising Rome, in having Italian and singing lessons, and seeing a great deal of society." Only Sundays were "always quiet days, and we went to Church regularly twice in the day, at the English Church."

"We had only been a short time in Rome when Percival Heywood arrived to claim his beautiful fiancée—our Maggie—and he spent the rest of the winter with us. She was immensely admired, and was considered the belle of Rome that winter, but her heart and time were given to Percival, and no one else was allowed to approach her. I suppose it was different with her less beautiful sister, and I had a variety of kind friends who made a

good deal of me, so that I ran the risk of being utterly spoilt."

"But the favoured one"—the recollections of those gay days end demurely—"was Mr. Sumner."

George Sumner was 22 at that time, enjoying a winter of foreign travel between the close of his University career and the beginning of his ministry. The portraits of him in those youthful days are made very attractive by his good looks, and also by a certain candid sweetness of expression characteristic of him all his life. It is not hard to fancy the joyous picture of youth and beauty and brilliant promise which he and the eighteen-year-old Mary Heywood must have made together in the happy holiday time in Rome, when both stood on the threshold of life's deepest meaning.

He was the youngest son of Bishop Charles Sumner, at that time Bishop of Winchester, and was ordained deacon in 1847, and priest in the following year. A few months later he married Mary Elizabeth Heywood, on the 26th of July, 1848.

It was a wedding as ideal as were the 61 years of married life that followed it. The summer sun shed its radiance upon the happy young bride and bridegroom, and the love of God hallowed their hearts and lives and glorified their love. No thought of the great work awaiting her was in Mary Sumner's mind as she left her childhood's home with the husband of her choice; yet one stage in her preparation for it had been accomplished during those early years which closed with the dawn of her wedding day.

Mary Elizabeth Heywood, aged 19

Chapter III

OLD ALRESFORD

(1848—1885)

"To all who live with us beneath our roof
Grant richest blessing and a constant proof
That Thou art with us, as we dwell in love,
A faint reflection of the Home above."

(*M. E. Sumner.*)

AT the time of his marriage, George Sumner was a curate (under Archdeacon Jacob) in the diocese of his father, the Bishop of Winchester, and in the same year he was appointed chaplain to his uncle, Archbishop Sumner (translated from Chester to Canterbury in 1848). The Sumner family had for several generations rendered distinguished service to the Church, and was linked by marriage with the Wilberforces; so that the young curate started with high traditions, as well as with the earnest purpose of living up to them.

In this he had, from the first, his young wife's full support. The same joyous zest that she had shown over her childish sports, and later in her girlhood's pleasures, now found its outlet in the work and life which she shared with her husband to the utmost of her power. At the end of their first year of married life Mr. Sumner's mother died, and he gave up his curacy in order to go to his father as chaplain, and cheer his loneliness. The young couple took up their abode at Farnham Castle when their first baby was only a few weeks old, and lived there for two years. So that it was not until three years after their marriage that they made the first of their two real homes together, in the Hampshire village of Old Alresford,

to which parish the Bishop appointed his son as rector in 1851. Here their youngest child was born, and all their three children grew up from babyhood, and here Mrs. Sumner's own beloved mother came to live, after the death of her husband in 1866, and died after four peaceful years made happy by the love of her children and grandchildren.

Motherhood.

It is interesting to learn from Mrs. Sumner herself how the foundations of the future Mothers' Union were being gradually developed through each successive stage in her own experience of motherhood. She makes this clear in some further fragmentary reminiscences.

"It has always seemed to me that the first thought about the Mothers' Union dawned upon me in the early years of my happy married life, when our eldest child was born. I shall never forget the awful sense of responsibility which seemed to overwhelm me as I took her in my arms, and realised that God had given an immortal soul into our keeping.

"As I gazed with rapture at my little baby, it struck me how much I needed special teaching for so great a work as the character-training of a child, and how little I knew about it. I felt that mothers had one of the greatest and most important professions in the world, and yet there was no profession which had so poor a training for its supreme duties. . . .

"The importance of a national effort to awaken the conscience of mothers to their responsibility and power, as character trainers, forced itself upon me more and more as time went on, and two more children were added to our home-circle, and my thoughts on the responsibility of motherhood grew and deepened. The years between 1849 and 1870 were spent in the practical training

of our children, during which time I had no leisure for work outside our home and parish.

"My own happy married life led me to realise that the foundation of a home is 'Holy Marriage,' in which husband and wife are one in mutual love and faith in God, in agreement as to Home Rule, and in the training of children. It led to the 'First Object' of the Mothers' Union.

"I could not help observing the influence exercised in our home, and over our children, by my husband's consistent high standard as regards religion. His character of peace and love was a constant support and help to me, and our mutual love, crowned with the love of God, created an atmosphere of mental sunshine in daily life."

That atmosphere of sunshine seems to have been the feature which struck every one who know Old Alresford Rectory in those days. Mrs. Gore-Browne* writes of it:—

"Old Alresford Rectory was certainly a very cheery place, for no *grumbling* was ever allowed. My mother would not permit it. She said it was like the east wind in a house. I never remember hearing her grumble about anything, in the whole course of my life. Even in all the weakness and limitations of her old age, she never complained, but always said God allowed them for her 'training.'"

In one of the addresses she gave in later years, Mrs. Sumner told how she used to keep herself reminded, when she was a young mother, of the motto she was fond of urging all mothers to adopt: "*Be yourself what you would have your child to be.*"

"I wrote it on a card, and hung it up beside my toilet table, so that I might be continually reminded of

* Second daughter of Bishop and Mrs. Sumner; married, in 1882, to the Rev. (afterwards Canon) Barrington Gore-Browne, second son of Bishop and Mrs. Harold Browne, who died in 1914.

its importance. I realised that a mother must be always training herself, if she would train her children."

So many of the thoughts which Mrs. Sumner embodied in her later writings and addresses had their origin in her own early experience, that a few of them may be fitly given here, to express the spirit in which she herself sought to meet the problems and responsibilities of motherhood. At the heart of it all lay a deep sense of *reverence* for God's part in the children whom He had given, and this she longed to share with every mother.

"I would urge every young mother to *reverence* her child," she wrote; and she was continually emphasizing the danger of "despising" one of Christ's little ones, and the harm so lightly wrought thereby, by careless kindness as well as by neglect. One of the most characteristic features in her teaching about motherhood —and by no means the least important—was her insistence upon the fact that to treat a baby merely as a pet or plaything, is, in effect, to "despise," by ignoring, that which is divine in it.

"I wish to awaken the attention of mothers to the fact that even although infants may be much valued, devotedly loved and cared for, and tenderly nursed, they are, in truth, being more or less despised when they excite no feelings of reverence, no respect . . . .

". . . . A little infant comes bright from God's presence, radiant with the light of heaven, His latest revelation of Himself to our care-hardened lives. Do we seek to retain the glory and beauty which a child reveals? Are we nursing the divine germ for fuller development, and taking heed lest in word or deed we offend one of these little ones? . . . .

". . . . We must train our children in the dawn of life; these first years are so unspeakably precious, and the father and mother form the atmosphere of the home; they make or mar the character of their children. Every life, you may

say, in the land is more or less formed inside a home, either for blessing or the contrary.

"... The gradual unfolding of a child's mind is profoundly interesting; you have to secure his heart and his imagination. It has been said that 'to fill the mind with beautiful images is the best thing that can be done to educate little children,' and what in the world is so beautiful to a child as the Personality of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His infinite love for children? They are placed in His arms in Baptism, and He marks them as His own. They are made 'members of Christ ....' Body and soul they are consecrated to Him, to be His faithful soldiers and servants to their lives' end.

"Little children are born with a religious instinct; they value sympathy, and the tender love and protecting care of the Lord Jesus brings joy into their lives, and allays sorrow and fear. A boy of four years old told me that when he was frightened in the dark, he asked our Lord to come close to him, and take care of him, 'and then,' said he, 'I wasn't afraid any more.'"

These were no purely imaginary counsels, but the simple gathering up of Mrs. Sumner's own experience. Her own children carried into later life the strong impression left on their minds by their mother's earliest teaching to them about their Baptism, and all that it meant to them, however young and helpless they might be. She made them realise that they were indeed little soldiers and servants of the unseen Lord Whom they knew to be so living and so dear to her. That knowledge was what brought it home to them, writes a niece who used to stay at the Rectory when she was a little child:—

"I think even then I realised how *real* was her religious belief, and how near she lived to the Lord she loved. She knew just how to speak to a child, as well to a grown person, with all her heart and interest going out to each one. She won the confidence of us all, and we all loved her.

"She was so beautiful, too; so full of gentle dignity, and of joyousness as well. She always seemed to me a *fairy* aunt,

with her quick movements, and her infectious, ringing laughter, and her wonderful tenderness to a child . . . .

". . . . Looking back across the years, I think one of the things that has always struck me most about Aunt Mary was her rich *youthfulness* of outlook. It seemed to express what so many religious people lack—the joyousness of being a follower of Christ."

The Widening Circle.

It is striking to find how this note of joyousness characterises the recollections of all who knew the home life at Old Alresford Rectory during all those thirty-four years. As the children grew up, the circle of interest and work and social life widened; the Rector was called upon increasingly for Diocesan work, and his wife was able to give more and more valuable help in the care of the parish, aided by her daughters as the years went on.

The Rectory was a large Georgian house, with the dignified, ample rooms of its period, and hospitable doors which seemed to stand always open. Young and old, rich and poor, parishioners, neighbours, friends from further afield, gathered there with happy confidence in a welcome that never failed. Classes, meetings, practices for the Church choir and for a Choral Society, charades and social entertainments of many kinds, all found place in the Rectory life, and the personality of its mistress was a foremost factor of success in each.

So also were her musical gifts and her voice, a high soprano of unusual quality, powerful, flexible and very sweet. It was beautifully trained, too, by a famous master whose method Mrs. Sumner used successfully in teaching her own daughters. She trained the Church choir also, and acted as organist, which she enjoyed, for she was a musician through and through. That was what gave her singing one of its greatest charms; it was so

entirely a matter of delight and not of effort to her. She sang as a bird sings, her hearers used to say, for the sheer joy of it. It was a great gift, this that God had given her, and she used it greatly in His service; in later days by speaking, as in those earlier years by song.

When one tries to reckon up all the activities that filled her days, it is easy to assume that Mrs. Sumner rejoiced in unbroken health and strength, yet as a matter of fact she had her share of illnesses. Possibly the small place which they seem to have occupied in her life is due to the fact that she took them as simply as she took her joys, without ever adding the burden of self-pity to the ills she had to bear. Neither did she inflict upon herself or others the poisonous misery of unkind thoughts; and we are learning more and more to realise how much this means in health of mind and body.

"Dulness and gloom could not live near her," as Mrs. Wilberforce wrote, "and because she drew her inspiration from so deep a well, her *joie de vivre* never left her . . . Few who met her could ever forget the flash of her eyes, or the ring of her merry laugh."

I think it was a daughter of Archbishop Trench (one of the Sumners' oldest and closest friends at Old Alresford) who remarked on the fact that during the course of quite a long visit at the Rectory she had heard not a single unkind word said of any person; and this sunny atmosphere of peace and goodwill seemed to follow Mr. and Mrs. Sumner wherever they went. At every house in the neighbourhood they were among the most welcome guests, and thoroughly did they enjoy the society of their friends.

That power of enjoyment was a gift which Mrs. Sumner never lost. She entered to the fullest extent into the delights of all their holidays, and most of all into those which had any spice of adventure in them. The self-same

spirit that had sent her galloping after her brother over hedges and ditches at Hope End enabled her to enter, with all the zest of those childish days, into the joys of travelling, without regard for its inconveniences. This was especially remarked by her fellow-travellers on a memorable holiday in the Holy Land.* No one was more deeply impressed than Mrs. Sumner by the wonderful places they visited, nor did anybody find such keen delight as she did in the long days of travelling on horseback, and the nights they passed in tents. No petty discomforts or contretemps could spoil her pleasure, and she owned to finding it quite an effort to return to the humdrum routine of ordinary life again.

Meetings.

In Mrs. Sumner's later years, when she was the leading speaker for the Mothers' Union, she would often seek to encourage beginners by recalling her own experience of the first meeting of women she undertook to address. It was at the Rectory, and the women invited were only some thirty or forty in number, and all well known to her. But when word was brought to her that they were assembled, her nerve failed her and she broke down so completely that she had to beg her husband to go in her stead to speak to them, and to send them away. But she resolved that it should never happen again, and she asked them to come again the following week, and forced herself to face the dreaded ordeal in reliance upon the Holy Spirit's power. After that, she used to say, although she had frequently to fight against nervousness, it never overcame her.

Her meetings for women became a weekly event, so much enjoyed by all concerned that a request was presently

* Described in Mrs. Sumner's book, *Our Holiday in the East.*

put forward that she should hold a meeting for men also, about which her notes tell us:—

"My husband cordially approved of the idea, and was delighted to arrange one for me every Sunday evening at 7 o'clock, while he took the Service at Armsworth, a district in a distant part of the parish. The men's meeting was a most delightful gathering of about thirty-five, who came regularly up to the Rectory every Sunday evening, and entered heartily into the Bible reading, and the suggested religious and home duties which I especially brought before them."

There is something characteristic in the courage with which Mrs. Sumner pushed her suggestions right home to the practical details that mean so much, and are so often overlooked.

"I ventured on one occasion to speak to the men about their married lives, and I told them, with a smile, that they doubtless said many pretty things to their wives before they were married, and they ought to show love and courtesy to them afterwards.

"I urged each of them to give a little present to his wife on her birthday. The hint was taken, and the wife of one of them, when next I called on her, told me that her husband had bought her a lovely shawl, and on her birthday he put it round her shoulders and gave her his good wishes with a kiss. She said, 'I couldn't help crying for joy, because he had never done such a thing or spoken so lovingly to me since we were married.'"

The sentence with which Mrs. Sumner concludes her memories of this men's meeting is characteristic of her attitude towards all her enterprises, great or small:—

"Although at first I was intensely alarmed at taking such a meeting of men, I soon found it a real pleasure. They were so kind, grateful, and responsive."

It was in 1876 that Mrs. Sumner first gave practical effect to her long-cherished idea of a Union of Mothers in prayer for their homes. She worked out a very simple card of practical suggestions, headed with the reminder which she had been wont to impress upon herself from her earliest days of motherhood:

"Remember that your children are given up, body and soul, to Jesus Christ in Holy Baptism, and that your duty is to train them for His service."

A few simple counsels to mothers followed, and then an appeal to seek in the Holy Communion the strength needful for putting them into practice, and after this the prayer now known to members of the Mothers' Union throughout the world. The card was used by some of Mrs. Sumner's own friends, as well as by the members of her women's meeting, but "I had no idea," she wrote "how I could make it more widely known, unless some good opportunity was vouchsafed to me."

The opportunity did not come for nine years, during which the time at Old Alresford was drawing to its close. Those years saw the departure from the Rectory of the son and two daughters, one after another, to their own married homes,* and together with this narrowing of the home-circle a continued increase of Diocesan work and duties came to Canon Sumner. He had been made Honorary Canon of Winchester in 1878, and in 1885 he became Archdeacon. Soon after his appointment to this Office a residentiary Canonry fell vacant, and was conferred upon him, together with a house in the Cathedral Close, and the thirty-two years of life and work at Old Alresford came to an end.

* The elder daughter was married, in 1871, to Mr. A. P. Heywood, eldest son of Sir Percival Heywood, Bart., of Dove Leys, Staffordshire. The second daughter married in 1882 (see p. 13), and in 1883 Mr. Heywood Sumner, the only son, married Miss Agnes Benson, younger daughter of Mr. Wm. Benson, of Langtons, Alresford.

So also did Mrs. Sumner's many years of prayer and waiting to see what future God had in store for the Mothers' Union of her dreams. There is a striking significance in the fact that the opportunity of launching it, which had been so long in coming, should present itself just at the time when the old home was being given up, and the special work and duties belonging to it were at an end.

It was during the autumn of that year, in the midst of the preparations for their move, that Archdeacon and Mrs. Sumner went together to the Portsmouth Church Congress, which was to be the means of bringing the Mothers' Union into existence. Of so memorable an occasion one seeks a personal account, and we owe the following reminiscence to Mrs. Wilberforce,* who can write of it better than anybody else. Not only was she present at the time, and closely concerned in the incident from which so much followed, but she also knew Mrs. Sumner, on terms of closest friendship, from earlier days right on to the end.

I count it, therefore, a very great gain to have Mrs. Wilberforce as narrator both for the first and for the last of the many public occasions belonging to Mrs. Sumner's work as Foundress of the Mothers' Union.

The Portsmouth Church Congress.

Mrs. Wilberforce's Narrative.

'Although the scene remains vividly before my eyes, it is difficult, after the lapse of so many years, to describe in words the details of the historic occasion when the Mothers' Union was called into being by the words of its beloved Foundress.

* Mrs. Wilberforce is known to all members of the Mothers' Union, by name if not in person. She was Diocesan President for London, 1908—1915, and Central President 1915—1920.

'In 1885 the Church Congress was held at Portsmouth, under the presidency of Bishop Harold Browne (of Winchester), and one of the items in the week's programme was a Mass Meeting for Women, to be held in the largest hall that existed in the great, densely-populated seaport town.

'My husband (then Bishop of Newcastle) had been asked to preside at this particular meeting, and as we came into the Hall, which was packed to overflowing, the sight which met us moved him profoundly. On all sides there were rows upon rows of women, many of them with sad, anxious faces, or bearing some unmistakable sign of poverty's cold grip, and he felt that a woman could probably speak to them with a greater power of sympathetic understanding than even the best of the appointed speakers, who were all men.

'That seemed the natural arrangement for such an occasion forty years ago. Women had not yet taken up the work of public speaking, and it was a sudden and quite unusual resolve that the Bishop took—in the truest sense, as I believe, an "inspiration of the moment"—when he went straight to Mrs. Sumner, our friend of many years' standing, and asked her to speak. She held up her hands in horror at the idea of such a thing, and her refusal was prompt and emphatic.

'Nothing daunted, he still pleadingly insisted, and upon her protesting that her husband would particularly dislike her speaking in public, the Bishop undertook to make it all right with him.

'Finally, placing his hands on Mrs. Sumner's shoulders, my husband gave her his blessing, and said that for that occasion he was her Bishop, and therefore able to lay his commands upon her. Her hesitation was all put behind her then, and she set herself to obey the call quite simply,

although "with a trembling heart," as she herself wrote afterwards.

'After this touching little incident we proceeded to the platform, Mrs. Sumner sitting behind the Chairman, who called upon her before the meeting closed. He told the audience that a woman who cared for them, and wanted to help them in the trials and difficulties of daily life, would now speak to them. She came forward, and spoke for a few minutes with all the charm and earnestness that thereafter characterised all her utterances, while we who listened to her felt that the Holy Spirit was manifestly guiding and strengthening her, in an undertaking which at that time called for no little courage.

'The following fragmentary notes of her address, which have survived, may serve, imperfect as they are, to give an idea of at any rate a part of the message that she gave upon this great occasion:—

"My friends, as wives and mothers we have a great work to do for our husbands, our children, our homes and our country, and I am convinced that it would greatly help us if we could start a Mothers' Union, wherein all classes could unite in faith and prayer, to try to do this work for God.

"With His help and inspiration we can conquer all difficulties, and raise the Home-life of our Nation. Union is strength. United prayer gives miraculous strength, and mothers can be made powerful and successful in their sacred duties by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Let us help one another to come to Him; to lay all our cares before Him, and to look up into His loving Face. He will not send us empty away; He will most surely strengthen, help and comfort us in our Home-life here, and fit us to meet together, when our work is done, in His own Presence, before the Throne of God."

'That same evening, at a social gathering, when thanking my husband for making her speak, Mrs. Sumner spoke

to us very earnestly of her great wish to band mothers together into a true *Union* of prayer and Christian fellowship, and I remember her using the expression, "*L'union fait la force.*" Next day a few of us met together, Mrs. Harold Browne (wife of the Bishop of Winchester) being present, and then and there, with the cordial approval of the Bishop of Winchester, the Mothers' Union was called into existence as a Diocesan organisation.

'The joy to me is great and abiding that my dear husband was privileged to play, under God, so important a part in leading our beloved Foundress to take the first step of all the very many which have made our Mothers' Union the mighty organisation it now is for the conquest, in God's Name, of the nation's homes.'

E. W.

Chapter IV

WINCHESTER—THE FIRST TEN YEARS
(1885—1896)

"A true home should be a light-house, shedding its quiet beams far and wide."—*Ruskin.*

ON the South side of Winchester Cathedral, near to the East end, stands an old-fashioned house with square front, and many-paned windows in tall white frames, and red brick walls that glow with a mellow warmth against their background of grey stone traceries and buttresses and soaring pinnacles. Nestling there in its walled garden, on the sunny side of the Cathedral, it seems the very type and picture of a true home, sheltered and guarded by the Church—a summary, in its own aspect, of the thirty-six years' tenancy which began at the close of 1885.

All through those years—through dark days as through bright—the old red house has been a centre of love, and light, and warmth of inspiration to an ever-widening circle beyond its welcoming doors. To make it a true home was the aim with which Archdeacon Sumner and his wife entered it that Christmas-tide; to share its happiness with others, and to use its opportunities, thankfully and unstintingly, in the service of the Lord from Whose Hand they took them, day by day. How abundantly the aim has been fulfilled might be told by thousands who have found a welcome there, and by hundreds of thousands into whose hearts the light of that sunny "home of peace and love" has flashed like a beacon across miles of land and sea.

It is a house with many windows, ample and wide; a house, essentially, to *look out* from; characteristic of that later stage in their wedded life which began for husband and wife when they took up their abode in Winchester Close alone together. It was a home-centre, rather than a home-circle, that they had to make now for the three families that had taken the places of the three children of former days. Only for that "youngest child," the Mothers' Union, was the sheltered house in the Close to be the nursery from which it should go forth into the world.

Every one who knew Mrs. Sumner will recall her insistence upon the "first ten years" as the especial portion of a mother in her child's life, the period in which she can exercise her great prerogative of moulding its character into a form that shall survive through all succeeding influences. So that there seems to be a special appropriateness in the fulfilment of this dictum in the development of the Mothers' Union. She was, most emphatically, the "Mother" upon whom its existence depended in those early days, and to whom all its members looked for help and guidance in dealing with each new problem as it arose, and she used her opportunity to the full in her untiring efforts to drive deep into the very heart of the Union the ideals for which she had called it into being.

It is not always easy to bear in mind the fact that Mrs. Sumner had reached the age of 57 when she set to work in earnest upon the vast enterprise of forming a Mothers' Union throughout the world. It is an age usually more or less suggestive of the shelf, even in the present restless times, but there is not much hint of any such leisured vantage-ground discernible among the records of those early days in the Winchester home.

The Winchester Home

The work of planning and organising began without delay, helped constantly by the Archdeacon's counsel and experience, as his wife loved to acknowledge. She had also the hearty and loyal co-operation of the fellow-workers whom she speedily gathered round her, and the assistance, from the first, of able secretaries, but it was necessarily upon her own shoulders that the chief burden of responsibility, and of effort as well, rested during the initial stages of the work.

The amount of writing that Mrs. Sumner got through in those days is a matter of awed conjecture! Leaflets, rules, explanatory papers, outlines of addresses, etc., were produced with amazing rapidity, in addition to the immense correspondence upon which she embarked. She wrote personally to most of the Diocesan Bishops, explaining the aims of the new venture, and asking for their approval and support, besides seizing every opportunity that offered itself of seeking to interest personal friends, far and near. Nor was she less ready to follow up each opening afforded by the letters of enquiry from strangers, which soon began to reach her. Many a mother, attracted by the thought of the Union, and with no Branch at hand that she could join, would write direct to the Foundress, and receive not only a prompt response, but a personal welcome also into the fellowship of Christian motherhood. In her busiest days Mrs. Sumner could always make time to write the few words of loving sympathy which have served in so many cases to turn the enquirer into a staunch fellow-worker.

It used to be said of her in those days that she was never without a pen in her hand, and it might be added with equal truth that she was never without a journey in prospect, or just completed, upon the business of the Mothers' Union. She threw herself with characteristic vigour into the work of starting new Branches, wherein

her husband's help was again of the greatest value. His position as Archdeacon brought him necessarily into touch with a large number of clergy in the diocese, and on his visits to different parishes Mrs. Sumner would often accompany him, and take such occasion as might offer of spreading the knowledge of the Mothers' Union.

She no longer shrank from addressing a meeting, when one could be arranged. It seemed as though the last battle with nervousness had been fought when she obeyed the call to speak at Portsmouth, and though she herself owned that she still often dreaded the ordeal, she never shirked it again, and she never broke down. Her training as a singer helped her here, and her utter lack of self-consciousness. The portrait of her at the beginning of this book—taken at about this time—gives one some idea of the erect, simple pose which was characteristic of her when she stood to address an audience, great or small, and she did not mind which it was. To gain a single new worker for the Mothers' Union was as worthy an undertaking, in the mind of its Foundress, as to sway a mass meeting in the Albert Hall, and that musical voice of hers stood her in good stead on all occasions. While, as to her powers of persuasion, I wonder how many hundreds of workers, and thousands of ordinary members have, in their turn, been drawn to a meeting somewhat half-heartedly, and with the firm resolve not to commit themselves, and have come away captured by Mrs. Sumner's confident claim upon their fellowship in the glorious task of winning the nation's homes for Christ! That, and nothing lower, was always the ground of her appeal, and "oh! what a mighty call it is!" she said in one of her addresses:

"Rich homes and poor homes—all alike—must be won for our God! It is a call to every one of us to live in prayer, that His help, His blessing and His inspiration may rest upon our earnest efforts."

And again:

"Let us settle it in our hearts that the greatest work we can do for the nation is to strive to bring the Church into the Home; which means Christ Himself into hearts and homes. . . . . Christ must be in every home, if it is to be in any way a home of peace and love . . . .

". . . . God's plans are better than our own, and He has ordained that the training-place for His human creatures should be the *home*: the training-place for *parents* as well as children . . . .

". . . . Our task is to restore true family life—for it is God's own institution, and therefore a divine thing—and to convince all our members that there are these two Divine Institutions in the world—the Church and the Home. The Home is God's institution as truly as is the Church: let that be the truth that we proclaim!"

It was a heavy task that Mrs. Sumner had set herself, in the launching of the Mothers' Union, and she owned, once or twice, that the strain of those first years was sometimes not far from breaking her down. It would probably have done so altogether, but that she never increased it by thinking how great it was, or how much she was doing, or had still to do. It was, emphatically, Mrs. Sumner's way to

> ". . . make each new action sound and true,
> Then leave it in its place unscanned."

It was her way, also, constantly to relieve the strain of her own efforts by the worship of God's glory. I sometimes wonder how much of that element of greatness which characterised her public work—her fearlessness, her certainty, and her breadth of vision—might be traced to the Cathedral Services which she attended so faithfully, and loved so well. In the heaviest press of claims and duties she never allowed herself to be too busy to seek in the united offering of praise and prayer a clearer vision of the glory of the Lord she served. She told a

friend that she always tried to leave *self* outside the Cathedral door, so that her whole being might be filled with the thought of God in His glorious temple. Perhaps we have here the secret of the confidence—so simple and so serene—with which she would go out into the world again, in the spirit of Bishop Lightfoot's ideal Christian worker who has laid down, "at the footstool of God, all his hopes and all his fears, all his success and all his failure, all that he is and all that he might be, content to take up thence just that which God shall give him."

The First Conference.

The first Diocesan Conference of the Mothers' Union was held in Winchester in November, 1887. About eighty friends and fellow-workers were present, to whom Mrs. Sumner was able to report a beginning full of promise, as the result of those two years of hard work. The Mothers' Union was by that time firmly established as a Diocesan Society, with the approval and hearty support of the Bishop of Winchester (then Dr. Harold Browne), and numbered fifty-seven Branches actually in existence, with eleven more about to be started. It had been taken up also in seventeen other Dioceses, and fresh enquiries were daily reaching its Foundress from far and near. The time, therefore, seemed ripe for a forward movement, involving a more extensive organisation, and a full and definite statement of its fundamental principles.

This statement, as accepted at the Conference, is interesting to quote in full:—

"It must be clearly understood, in joining the Mothers' Union, that there is no interference. Each member is asked to carry out the principles of the Society in her own home, in the best way she can, and it is well to depend as much upon individual work as upon meetings.

"Those who join are asked to try and interest others in the Union, and persuade them to become members.

"*The Principles* upon which we would build our work are these:—

"That the prosperity of a nation springs from the family life of the homes.

"That family life is the greatest institution in the world for the formation of the character of children.

"That the tone of family life depends in great measure upon the married life of the parents—their mutual love, loyalty and faithfulness the one to the other.

"That religion is the indispensable foundation of family life, and that the truths of the Christian faith should be taught definitely at home as well as at school.

"That parents are themselves responsible for the religious teaching of their children.

"That character is formed during the first ten years of life by the example and habits of Home.

"That example is stronger than precept, and parents therefore must be themselves what they wish their children to be.

"That the history of the world proves the divine power given by God to parents, and to Mothers especially, because children are placed in their arms from infancy, in a more intimate and closer relationship with the Mother than with the Father, and this moreover, during the time when character is formed.

"That the training of children is a profession.

"That it needs faith, love, patience, method, self-control, and some knowledge of the principles of character-training.

"That it is the duty of every Mother with her own lips to teach her child that he is God's child, consecrated body and soul in Holy Baptism to be our Lord Jesus Christ's soldier and servant unto his life's end.

"That every baptised child should be taught the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments . . . . and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health."

Detailed rules and provisions for working the Society were also drawn up, and a card of membership was adopted, similar, in all respects, to the one Mrs. Sumner had drawn up for her own band of mothers at Old Alresford, more than ten years before. Its great feature was that, as Mrs. Sumner always was careful to point out, it presented no "tests" of membership, but set forth the two Sacraments ordained of Christ Himself "as the pillars of our work, because they centre in Him."

"On every card we place the two Sacraments, not as part of the rules (there is no sacramental test) but as the pillars of our work, and we have found them to be so. They are the standing orders of our Master, Jesus Christ, and we nail them to our mast."

The card of membership was always a matter of importance in Mrs. Sumner's eyes, as a reminder of those obligations of Christian motherhood which members of the Union pledged themselves to strive, with God's help, to fulfil. She used constantly to urge that the card should not be put away in some place where it would be forgotten, but kept where it would be seen frequently enough to serve its purpose. Another of her suggestions was that members should try to make a practice of reading the card through on Sundays, "remembering that they have promised to try and keep these rules, and that each one means a great deal in character training."

The mention of the card brings to mind what was probably one of the hardest efforts and greatest achievements in all Mrs. Sumner's long work for the Mothers' Union. I refer to the time, some twenty-five years later, when the Central Council of the Society resolved that some changes in the form of the Members' Card had become desirable. That card was so near to Mrs. Sumner's heart, that the proposal could not come otherwise than as a pang to her, breaking, as it inevitably must, the cherished

associations of so many years; but when she found herself in the minority, she accepted the decision of her fellow-members of Council with a ready gentleness which impressed more than one among them as a greater triumph than even the most brilliant of her successes.

Growth and Development.

"From this meeting held in Winchester in 1887," Mrs. Sumner herself wrote, "dated the rapid progress of the Mothers' Union. It seemed to fill a recognised want, and from one diocese after another came the reports of fresh Branches started under episcopal sanction, and with the help and support of the parochial clergy."

The following year saw the extension of the work among young mothers of means and leisure, with the help of the Dowager Marchioness of Hertford, who soon became one of the most valued leaders of the Mothers' Union. She was immensely interested in it from the first, and spared no pains to gain the support of mothers of all classes.

Another important step forward was made in the starting, in 1888, of the *Mothers' Union Journal*, at Lady Jenkyns' suggestion, and under her able editorship. Now that the *Journal* has attained its present considerable size, and vast circulation, it is interesting to recall the fact that it was first issued as quite a small leaflet, to supplement Mrs. Sumner's personal work by circulating a quarterly letter from her to the many new Branches of the Union which it would be beyond her power to visit. 8000 of these papers were issued in the first year, but by the end of 1889 they had been more than doubled in size, while the circulation had risen to over 46,000.

Two years later the work of the *Journal* was supplemented by the publication of *Mothers in Council*, to cater for a different circle of readers, and in this second

venture both Bishop* and Mrs. Sumner took a large share from the start. They made themselves responsible for the initial loss, and shared the literary work with Miss Charlotte Yonge, who edited it until her last illness. Piles of letters from Miss Yonge have survived among Mrs. Sumner's papers, showing how closely and harmoniously they worked together. The Bishop himself took over the editorship for some years after Miss Yonge's death in 1901, and when the periodical was finally handed over to the Centre, a substantial sum of accumulated profits went with it.

In 1890 Mrs. Sumner addressed a meeting in London which resulted in the starting of a London Diocesan Branch of the Mothers' Union in the London Diocese, largely through the initiative of Lady Horatia Erskine and the Hon. Mrs. Evelyn Hubbard. Two years later the first general Conference of the Union was convened in London, at which it was reported that the Society was then at work in twenty-eight dioceses, the number of Branches being 1550, with a total membership of over 60,000. This wide extension of the work seemed to call for a central organisation, which the Foundress herself advocated, but it was not found possible, on that occasion, to advance beyond a decision to hold an Annual Conference of representatives from all the dioceses, for the discussion of questions affecting the work of the Union.

It took three more years to develop the centralisation of the work, and during that time Mrs. Sumner's own energies were greatly taken up with the care of her husband. His consecration, as Bishop of Guildford, in 1888, had entailed an increasing amount of work

* Archdeacon Sumner was consecrated Bishop of Guildford in 1888.

upon him, and in 1892 he found himself forced to rest. An accident that summer, in which he broke his right leg, increased his disabilities, and he and Mrs. Sumner spent the following winter in Algiers. Even after they had returned to Winchester, Mrs. Sumner found her presence very needful at home, and she was ready to welcome the completion, in 1895, of a scheme for establishing a central Mothers' Union Organisation in London, to be governed by a Council of Diocesan Presidents and Elected Members, under a Central President.

"Thus," as Lady Horatia Erskine wrote, "the much-needed Central Organisation became an accomplished fact, the heart of a great body, beating through all its many veins and arteries with the life derived from the love of God and the desire to promote His Kingdom in all the 'families of the earth.'"

Needless to say, the Foundress of the Mothers' Union was unanimously elected to the office of Central President, and the first Central Council was held, under her leadership, in May 1896.

(The earliest badge of the Mothers' Union.)

Chapter V

OVERSEAS

"Uniting many hearts in many lands,
And drawing all to thoughts of things above."
Epitaph on Lady Augusta Stanley.

THIS seems to be the most fitting point at which to speak of Mrs. Sumner's part in the world-wide extension of the Mothers' Union overseas. That extension was just beginning to make itself felt at the time when the centralisation of the Society was accomplished, and it is a significant point to note in the after-history of the work, that the growth of this overseas work has kept pace with the strengthening of the centre.

The year 1893 saw the starting of the Mothers' Union in New Zealand and Australia; Tasmania, India and Ceylon coming next, in 1895; and the West Indies, Canada, Japan, Cairo, Malta and South America following in the course of the next four years. South Africa had to wait until the end of the War, in 1902, and after that the rate of development grew increasingly rapid, in all parts of the world. The history of this continued advance "into all the world" must be read elsewhere, but no picture of Mrs. Sumner's life would be complete without some reference to the personal share which she herself took in it, by her pen, by her prayers, and by that true mother's love that went out to all the daughter Branches of her beloved Union in far-off lands.

Of that love, and of the quick response it never failed to evoke, I am glad to be able to give a reminiscence

which Miss Gertrude King * supplies from her own experience.

" From the moment that our Foundress heard of the need of Mothers' Union work in Madagascar, she took the Malagasy mother to her heart. Needless to say they idealised her, and she became to them an embodiment of all that is highest and best in motherhood. Wonderful letters passed between them. Mrs. Sumner always began, ' My dear daughters,' and ended as ' your loving white mother.' She greatly treasured the following letter, which she received from the Madagascar Branch soon after it was started :—

" ' To Madam Sumner and the Mothers' Union over the sea (England) :—

Honoured Madam,

We, the members of the Mothers' Union here in Madagascar, come to visit you and the Mothers' Union over the sea. We, your children, were very pleased to receive your letter of welcome into the Mothers' Union. We ask you to pray to God to help forward the Mothers' Union in the future, if it is His Will, and we are glad that Miss King has been sent to tell us about it, and to help it forward ....

We are ninety-one mothers now, who promise to keep the rules, and we hope, by the blessing of God, the Union will become still larger. We thank you very, very much for the beautiful members' cards; we, your children in the Lord. We visit you, and say good-bye to you, and to the Mothers' Union over the seas.

Hoy Rasoan Andrianina (in the name of all your children in the Union in Antananarivo).'

" Some years later a returned missionary met Mrs. Sumner, and she said to him : ' Do you know that I have 500 dear black daughters in Madagascar ? ' Later on the 500 became 1000, and she still claimed them all unreservedly as her ' dear daughters.'

* Central Overseas Secretary to the Mothers' Union; formerly Diocesan Secretary in Madagascar.

"The following message was taken home to her by a returning missionary:—

"'Tell her,' the Malagasy members said, 'that we will try, by the grace of God, to hold the Faith and keep the commandments, until we meet her in Paradise.'

"In a letter, written in 1919, of thanks for a small present of Malagasy lace, Mrs. Sumner expressed her desire that all her 'black daughters' should know 'how dear they are to me, and how earnestly I pray for them that they may have their hearts given to their Heavenly Father and our precious Saviour Jesus Christ, as faithful wives and true Christian mothers, dedicating their children in Holy Baptism, filled with the Holy Spirit, and training them for eternal happiness in their heavenly Home .... Do tell my Malagasy members how much I love them and pray for them, as well as for others who are so near and dear to me. Oh! may we meet, when this life is over, in the glorious Presence of our Blessed Lord.'"

It was the living personality that shone out through all Mrs. Sumner's letters, which made them so potent a force in strengthening the bond of union with mothers overseas. In a letter from some Australian members to their Foundress, they sent her their loving assurance that they blessed God "for what you *are*, as well as for what you are doing for mothers, and for generations to come"; and a rather solitary worker in South Africa wrote:—

"You know, don't you, that we out here, in this far away corner of the Vineyard, say, 'God bless Mrs. Sumner,' thanking Him for having given you the inspiration and the zeal and the courage to start the Mothers' Union, and patience to put it on such a firm basis?"

This last was a point often referred to, as giving the Mothers' Union its great value as a means of raising the ideal of motherhood. From China, when the work was started there, came word that Mrs. Sumner's insistence upon the *reverence* due from a mother to the infant life which came from God, was the teaching most needed to

counteract that disregard of the sanctity of life which has cast so grim a shadow over Chinese homes.

A letter from a member in China, which Mrs. Sumner greatly treasured, is interesting to read in the translation that accompanied it.

"From China—Kutien City—Hill of New Righteousness,
'Female Light' Women's School.

Greetings to the Bishop's wife! All happiness and peace!

We hear that the Mothers' Union was started by your Honourable Person. We feel that it was of God's grace that you were allowed to begin such a Union, thus showing your great love to the little, little children of China, and by this means also to teach us women of China good methods of carefully bringing up, and educating our children—a work beyond our human strength. We beg you and all other members of the Mothers' Union to pray for us, that we mothers may receive God's Holy Spirit, to do this work in His strength.

At our last meeting the letter written by your Honourable Person was read to us, and all present were delighted to hear it. Ten new members joined our Union that afternoon, stirred by your letter. We do so thank God for this, and will not cease to be thankful.

I rejoice that my six grandchildren can have such good, Christian teaching.

The letter of Ding Daik Ching, for the Kutien Branch of the Mothers' Union."

It is tempting to go on quoting from the old packets of letters from all parts of the world, treasured by her to whom they were written for the sake of the love they expressed, but one more must suffice, this time from India, whence Miss Rix wrote:—

"I gave your message to the mothers at the last meeting. They were most grateful, and begged to send you their warmest salaams and thanks for your prayers and your remembrances . . . Some of the keener spirits among them have banded themselves into a little company for holding cottage meetings, and paying visits, to stir up the careless and indifferent."

And a little later on she tells how Mrs. Sumner's last letter to the Branch had been translated into Tamil, to the great pleasure of the members.

Over and over again one reads, in different words, the same assurance of eager appreciation of all the little personal tokens which went out in such generous profusion from the old red house by the Cathedral, far and wide across the seas, into ancient kingdoms and new lands. One New Zealand worker wrote, on her return from a visit to the old country, to tell of the interest aroused in her members by the photographs of Winchester Cathedral she had brought back with her—" particularly the one showing your own home."

A photograph of the Foundress herself, needless to say, was still more highly prized when she sent it, as she sometimes did, with a letter of motherly love and greeting to some new Branch. Her " far-away daughters " were very near her heart, and she made it a rule not to let a day pass without bringing their needs, together with her own, to God in prayer and offering thanks on their behalf, for each new achievement granted to them through the Mothers' Union.

It was a keen personal pleasure to her to be asked by some members in West Africa to join with them in praising God for " what the Mothers' Union has done for some homes in Lagos," or to hear from Australia of the splendid pioneer work done through the Branches there, in the cause of religious education.

A personal relationship is so subtle a thing that one fears to spoil some of its beauty by emphasising it overmuch; yet, on the other hand, it is hardly possible to over-estimate the significance in the development of the Mothers' Union overseas, of the living bond of love and prayer which kept the Foundress, in her quiet home, linked with the loneliest member, and the remotest Branch.

As one Diocesan President wrote from Australia:—

"So many of our mothers lived in England once, and some have been here quite a short time; and it is so touching the way they come up to me at the meetings, and tell me of the English Branch to which they belonged, and how—in many cases they 'once' heard you speak, or 'once' saw you."

"She was a lady with white hair," was one member's reminiscence, "and a lovely smile! And she spoke to us as if she loved us all."

Another Australian worker, writing to Mrs. Sumner about an expedition made up-country to start a Branch in some isolated spot, insisted that "the best credentials I brought were that I had known you."

If the personal link had been all, it might have promised ill for the continuance of the work based upon it, but Mrs. Sumner never relaxed her insistence upon those fundamental principles which were the true bond of union among members throughout the world, and upon the one aim to which they were all pledged, in the conquest of the nation's homes for God.

At the first overseas Conference, held in London in 1897, this was the point on which the Foundress chiefly dwelt. She spoke of the interest she had taken in other forms of work, and how it had at last struck her that almost all organisations of good work were hampered by the home influence being so often against them. By degrees she had come to realise that what was needed to spread Christ's Kingdom on earth was to win the homes for Him.

And to this end, as she wrote to an Overseas President, "we must get the members of our Mothers' Union to act as missionaries amongst their relations and friends, helping to bring the Christian life into the darkened homes where as yet our dear Lord is not loved and honoured."

The Golden Wedding.

On the 26th of July, 1898, the Bishop and Mrs. Sumner kept their Golden Wedding Day. The family part of the Commemoration came in the morning, when over thirty near relatives and friends joined with them at what was in the truest sense a *Eucharist*, in the Cathedral. In the afternoon a large gathering was assembled by the Diocesan Council of the Mothers' Union, at the old Palace of Wolvesey, whereat the Bishop and his wife were to be the honoured guests.

The main function of the afternoon was the presentation of various addresses and other tokens of the deep gratitude and affection which members of the Mothers' Union had learnt to feel for their Foundress. The gifts had all been chosen for their appropriateness to Mrs. Sumner's labours, and included some gold pencils, a beautiful old writing table with gilt fittings, and bank notes to the amount of £125, for the furtherance of the work.

Mrs. Sumner's thanks were simply spoken, and referred mainly to the debt she owed to her husband in the work to which she had been called. "He has been my guide, adviser, and constant helper at every step in the history of the Mothers' Union, and without him I should never have been able to carry it on."

And then, with one of her happy touches, she added, smiling: "As it is our Golden Wedding Day, you will bear with me if I praise my husband, and say we can look back on fifty years of happy, united, blessed life."

To the Bishop of Guildford was left the official returning of thanks, and yet he too robbed it of most of its formality, as he spoke gratefully of the wonderful kindness that had been showered upon them all the day.

"We have been receiving numberless telegrams, letters, and presents since the early morning, the door-bell

has been ringing incessantly, and this all shows the kind, loving feeling towards my dear wife and myself, which touches me deeply ....

"I do not believe any one in this room, except myself, knows the hours she spends in work connected with the Mothers' Union. I know the Society is looked upon by some members of our family as my wife's youngest child, and I am afraid they sometimes think that the youngest child is taxing their mother's strength too much! But I am confident that it is taxed in a good work. I believe that not until the last day comes shall we ever know the good which this Mothers' Union is doing, not only in England, or in this Diocese, but throughout the four quarters of the globe."

A service of thanksgiving was held the next day in the Cathedral, at which some 1200 members of the Mothers' Union in the Winchester Deanery joined in thanksgiving for the work of the Union, and this was followed by another gathering at Wolvesey Palace, to give an opportunity for the presents to be seen, and for the Bishop and Mrs. Sumner to express their thanks in person to this larger company.

Chapter VI.

AN ENDING

(1899—1909)

"Being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence, not in heart."

LOOKING through the records of the decade between Mrs. Sumner's "Golden" and "Diamond" Wedding celebrations, it is not easy to bear in mind the fact that these were the years from 70 to 80 in her age. They were as full as ever of work and interest, and on a wider scale than was feasible so long as the responsibility for the organisation of the Mothers' Union rested so heavily upon the shoulders of its Foundress. The fact of having completed her three score years and ten was to her no reason for laying down her task, but rather for striving more and more fervently to work while yet it was day.

Her responsibilities as Central President had the first claim upon her work for the Society, and very faithfully did she fulfil them. The meetings of the Central Council and Committee, now held in London, were not only regularly attended by the President, but earnestly prepared for also, by her own unfailing method of quiet prayer and waiting upon God. And the result was strikingly apparent to her fellow-workers. I think that throughout the whole task of collecting personal records and reminiscences of Mrs. Sumner, nothing has struck me more forcibly than the unanimity of the impressions retained by those who attended the Council in those early days.

One after another has chosen precisely the same points to emphasise. First, the personality of the President herself; the sweetness of temper which she combined with a very strong will, and her gracious, unfailing courtesy. And next—even more strongly—all alike were conscious of the "atmosphere of the Holy Spirit," as one has called it, that she brought into all their deliberations. Her opening prayer was so *real*, some have said; it seemed to create a new and spiritual atmosphere, filled with the personal Presence of the Lord to Whom she would assuredly be turning for light and help in meeting each problem that arose.

A letter received from one of the Vice-Presidents* voices the impressions of all.

"I can truly say that I never attended our Executive Meetings without feeling that from the moment when our President asked God's blessing on the work we were about to undertake, it seemed as though His Spirit were indeed there, guiding and helping her, and making us all realise that it was His work that we were privileged to have a share in. I used to return home after those meetings strengthened and refreshed."

The records of work done in Council and Committee belong to the history of the Society rather than of its Foundress, and must be looked for there. The one point I would note in this place—for it was a matter so near to Mrs. Sumner's heart—is that it was while still under her leadership that the Mothers' Union first stood forth before the world as a body of women definitely pledged to labour, and to fight, if need be, for the sanctity of Christian marriage.

One tiny anecdote must be allowed a place; it is so characteristic. It was in those early days, when the first corporate efforts of the Union in this direction were

* Mrs. W. H. Johnson, M.U. President in the Diocese of Chester.

being planned, that a counsellor from outside, of cautious mind, urged Mrs. Sumner not to set her aims too high or plan impossibilities.

"Where is the use," he asked, "in wasting your energies on things outside the scheme of practical politics?"

Quick as thought came the rejoinder—given quite simply, and not as an attempt to "score"—"Is God, then, outside the scheme of practical politics?"

The Work of Speaking.

This seems to be the place in which to touch more particularly upon Mrs. Sumner's methods and gifts of speaking, and her counsels to other speakers; not that these belong, in any exclusive sense, to the time when she was President, but only that they were necessarily brought then into greater prominence. Requests to speak in different parts of the country poured in upon her, and she had more time to spare for travelling now that she had been relieved of the detailed work of organisation.

It seems strange to think of a speaker's heaviest work being undertaken after the age of 70, yet so it was with Mrs. Sumner, and the largest of all her meetings—a gathering of some 8000 in the London Albert Hall—was addressed by her when she was not far off 80!

Her girlhood's training as a singer stood her in good stead, enabling her to keep that beautiful voice of hers serviceable to the end, and also to make it audible in even the largest halls, without effort to her hearers or herself. At a crowded meeting in that difficult place for sound, the Great Hall in the Westminster Church House, many who were present have told me that of all the speakers, men and women, Mrs. Sumner was the only one whose every word could be heard quite easily at the far end of the hall.

A beautiful voice, *carefully trained;* we must not lose sight of that second element in Mrs. Sumner's success as a speaker, for it was one upon which she herself laid constant stress. In all the advice she used to give to other speakers, she would insist upon the importance of learning, not merely how to speak at a meeting, but first and foremost how to produce and use the voice. Right breathing, true enunciation, and the elimination of strain—all these, she considered, needed to be learnt and practised as a matter of voice-training.

"You have to be taught to *write*, first of all," she would say, "and not straightway to *write a letter*. And just in the same way you must begin by learning to speak *in the right way*, before you can learn to speak at a meeting. If you can do the first, the second will be no trouble to you."

Such was certainly her own experience, and her remarkable success makes her advice worth listening to. Her counsels were practical, clear and very simple. The work of speaking, to her mind, demanded three distinct lines of preparation, and the method she advocated was the same for each; to make your preparation *thorough*, and then to forget it.

She took first, as I have said, the preparation of the *voice*, as the instrument to be used; her advice being: "Master your instrument; learn to use your voice in the right way, and then you need never give it a thought at your meetings. It won't fail you."

Next came the preparation of the *mind*, as the user of the instrument; and this meant the clear and careful grouping of the subject to be dealt with. Mrs. Sumner was fond of recommending the "peg" method of working one's mind over the fundamental elements in the subject until certain definite points emerged, which could be ranged in order in the memory, as "pegs" whereon to

hang the different parts of what has to be said. Here also she urged thoroughness in preparation, and most sincerely did she practise it herself. The old notes that have survived show how carefully she would write out beforehand not only the gist but the substance of what she had to say upon even the most familiar topics. To the very end of her work as a speaker, when the pen moved less lightly in fingers that were growing stiff, she would cover pages with almost the complete text of quite a simple address; not that she needed or would use them when the time came, but simply to make her preparation as complete as possible.

The third and crowning part in this preparation was, of course, that of the *heart*, to be made in an act of *offering*. The trained voice and the carefully arranged thoughts must be laid at the Master's Feet, for Him to bless and to use according to His will. This was no form of words with Mary Sumner, but the actual process which she carried out before every meeting she addressed. Having done her own part in preparation, she wanted to give God time to do His, by kneeling at His Feet in simple, humble waiting upon Him. The careful work and thought, once done, must be forgotten; merged in the thought of God, burnt up in the flame of His Spirit, in order that the result which should issue forth might be purged of the dross of self and self-seeking. Her daughter tells us how her mother would go apart for a quiet hour of prayer before the simplest village meeting no less than before her largest gatherings.

The assurance of having her subject "at her fingers' ends" was not enough for Mrs. Sumner. It was not at her fingers' ends, she would say, but in her heart that a speaker must have her subject, if she would reach the hearts of others; and for this she must look to God for the in-breathed power of His Holy Spirit.

Yet although Mrs. Sumner set her standard of preparation high, she would not allow that it was beyond the reach of any one with a real message to give, and a live enthusiasm in the giving of it. Those she held to be the two indispensable elements in a speaker's equipment.

"One great secret of success in speaking is to be thoroughly 'enthused' with one's subject—to have mind and heart full of it, to feel every word we utter—then 'the living thought will speak the winged word; for thoughts that breathe always find words that burn.' . . . .

". . . . Enthusiasm is a thorough belief in the greatness and importance of the cause we have taken up, and the crusade of the Mothers' Union is to try and win every home in the land for our Sovereign Master, through the influence of the mothers."

Another secret of success in speaking she summed up in Canon Fleming's phrase, as the "art of forgetting yourself and others"; an art "not incompatible with the most careful study and the most finished utterance."

I quote from some admirable "Hints to Speakers" (published as a leaflet), in which Mrs. Sumner makes an earnest appeal to the ordinary Enrolling Member to sacrifice her own shyness and self-distrust in the cause of the Mothers' Union, and *make a venture of faith* in speaking to her fellow-members of the great things wherein all are equally concerned.

"You can speak simply and readily to two or three people," she urged. "Why not to twenty or thirty? You can say the few words that are necessary at a meeting of your own Branch; why not also to another Branch in your own neighbourhood?"

That was Mrs. Sumner's great point—that no Mothers' Union worker had the right to say she could not speak *until she had tried*, and she instanced, for the encouragement of others, her own early experience.

"On one occasion a large band of mothers was awaiting the arrival of the speaker who had convened them. They waited in vain. She was assailed by an unconquerable dread that day—she gave up the struggle, and the women were sent away; but the next time she persevered through pain and difficulty, and now the fear and nervousness has in the main departed.

". . . . I am convinced that nine out of ten educated women could become good speakers, and touch the hearts of mothers of all classes, if they would simply carry out some of the practical suggestions given, and share with others the strong convictions they themselves have formed of their responsibilities . . . .

". . . . Christ has need of your individual work—no one else can do it; if you refuse, that particular piece of work will be left undone."

And the loss would be not only to the work, but to the worker; that was the other side of the truth, which she dwelt upon elsewhere. "Every rejected opportunity of service makes life poorer, duller, less God-like."

There stood the penalty of timorousness, and over against it was the promise of strength and help to those of good courage. Mrs. Sumner would often point to the rich *rewards* won by the speaker who learns to make ventures in the Name of the Lord; to the wonderful nearness to Christ which comes from clinging to His Presence; to the power which springs from dependence upon Him, and, above all, to the peace and poise of mind so vital to the work of speaking.

"Make Him your Friend and Helper in this matter. He can keep you 'in perfect peace.' He only. He can quiet all your restless anxieties, and banish all your fears and your thoughts of self, and tune your mind to peace and harmony. That is His great work:

'Thou shalt know Him, when He comes,
By the holy harmony
That His Presence makes in thee.'"

Just one word must be added as to the effect which Mrs. Sumner's counsels have had upon those whom she sought to encourage to make the venture of speaking to others, and here I cannot do better than quote from two letters. The first was written to Mrs. Sumner herself, after an interview which her correspondent found "a real help and inspiration."

"You have been so much used in the Master's service that I think you passed on some of your own fire. You made me feel that I must be 'up and doing' more bravely in my little corner of the Vineyard. . . . I take much back with me, and I shall try to carry out your suggestions."

Another worker, writing about Mrs. Sumner, says:—

"She has led even very timid and inefficient me to dare to speak to Mothers' Union Branches, because she made the Union such a great reality that one *had* to speak about it when no one else could or would."

The Albert Hall Meeting.

It would not be possible to furnish a complete list of Mrs. Sumner's meetings in different parts of the country; still less to give any report of them all. It seems best, therefore, to deal rather fully with the great London gathering of October, 1908, as being fairly representative, and also in itself somewhat of a historic occasion.

The meeting was fully reported in various newspapers, from one of which I quote here.

"A great meeting for members of the Mothers' Union was held in the Royal Albert Hall, Kensington, on October 31st, under the presidency of the Bishop of Stepney, now Archbishop of York. The assembly numbered over 8000, and many requests for tickets had had to be refused. The gathering was representative of every class. Mrs. Sumner, Central President of the Mothers' Union, was one of the speakers, and when she entered the Hall with the Bishop of Stepney a most

hearty reception was accorded her. Other speakers were the Bishop of Manchester, Mrs. Oluwole, Mrs. Clare Goslett and the Rev. H. Woollcombe.

"In the course of the Chairman's opening address he begged his hearers to realise what was so strongly present in his own mind, that in speaking to those many thousands in the Mothers' Union, he was speaking to many thousands of the ministers of God. He appealed very earnestly to every mother there to look up continually into the Face of Him—the Almighty Father—after Whom all fatherhood is named, and to realise that from Him direct they receive a ministry—the ministry of the protection and consecration of the home. . . . He concluded a very fine speech upon the vocation of motherhood by calling upon 'one whom you all have met to listen to and to honour—one who is never old in appearance, and everlastingly young in heart—Mrs. Sumner!

"When Mrs. Sumner stood up to speak the immense assembly rose as one to their feet, and greeted her with cheers and applause and the waving of handkerchiefs.

"Mrs. Sumner said she could hardly express how overwhelmed she felt with their kindness, their sympathy, and their love. It was an immense joy to her to meet them all, and she earnestly trusted that this splendid gathering—they had never had such a large one before—would result in a much stronger belief in the three objects for which they were working.

". . . . The Mothers' Union had just come of age, it was 21 years old, and she was happy to say they had now nearly covered the Empire with their number of over a quarter-of-a-million members and associates, and 6000 branches. Last year the numbers who joined them were 22,895. Besides that she was glad to say their objects and their rules had been translated into twelve different languages, and they were winning a way in other countries.

"It might be said that in this country the two greatest institutions, the two Divine institutions, were the Church and the Home. The Home based on holy marriage—faithful marriage—was appointed by God for the good of humanity when He created the world. She wanted them to remember

that the character of the whole nation was formed in the Home. People talked about the schools, and a great help they were, when they were Christian schools; but it was in the Home—God's own institution—that the character of the nation was truly formed . . . .

". . . . There was nothing more beautiful than the way in which a little child was naturally attracted by the person of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ. The secret of a noble life was to teach the child that he was a soldier of Christ, and they must begin the battle of life early.

". . . . They must know what they believed, so that they could teach their children. Inculcate the vital truths of Christianity, and they armed children for the time when they left home, and stepped into the great world, and took their part in the battle of life. . . .

" She ended her eloquent address with a profoundly moving appeal, which reached the ears of all the thousands present, and their hearts also—coming, as it clearly did, directly from her own.

" 'O my sisters! with all my heart and soul I beseech you to be earnest in prayer and effort, not only so that your own homes may shine gloriously for our Master Christ, but also that you may try to win over other homes for Him.' "

The Old Red House.

From this picture of the vast hall, and the crowded meeting, and the thousands of Mothers' Union members eagerly listening to every word their Foundress spoke to them—eagerly striving to gain a look, a word, a smile from her as she left the Hall—it is pleasant to follow her back to the old red house in the Cathedral Close, where the peaceful life went on, as undisturbed, and as deeply prized by her as though she had no calls to take her beyond those quiet precincts.

Gradually, as the first decade of the new century went by, Mrs. Sumner found herself drawn more and more continuously within the circle of the home, owing to the failure

of her husband's health. Each year that passed brought some diminution of the Bishop's strength, and with it the laying down of one after another of the labours that he loved. He resigned the office of Archdeacon in 1900, his work as Bishop of Guildford in 1906, and the Canonry in his beloved Cathedral shortly afterwards. This was the greatest wrench of all, but happily it did not entail leaving the home which had grown so dear to his wife and himself in the twenty-two years throughout which they had made it such a "sunny meeting-ground for all and sundry."

So the Bishop of Southampton* describes it, in speaking of the days when he succeeded Dr. Sumner as Suffragan Bishop.

"It was all so 'fair as well as good'—the home-life in the latest days of more than sixty sunny years, with the gentle Bishop at one end of the table, and the pretty old lady at the other. The quiet garden beyond, that she so dearly loved, was just the outer setting and expression of the home peace within, from whence emanated all that amazing energy."

It is a pleasant picture of the life in the old red house; and side by side with it other glimpses also take shape from treasured memories. In one of these we see the garden, on a summer's afternoon, thronged with mothers young and old, whom the Bishop and his wife are entertaining at tea, and to whom they will presently each speak a few simple words of good cheer.

That is a frequent scene, as also is the next, when the garden walls ring with the merry shouts of choir boys from the Cathedral, invited there for games followed by an ample tea. Mrs. Sumner's love for boys, and her real enjoyment of their company, never left her. She delighted in watching them at play which recalled the old happy

* Dr. Cecil Boutflower, consecrated Bishop of Dorking in 1906; became Bishop of South Tokyo in 1909, and Bishop of Southampton in 1921.

days with her brother at Hope End, and when full justice had been done to the tea provided, she would take them up to the roomy, old-fashioned drawing room for a concluding game of " musical chairs," playing for them herself, her daughter tells us, " the same merry tunes and polkas that she had played for us when we were children."

A fresh picture is called up, of the hall door hospitably open, and the white-haired mistress of the house standing there to welcome her own dear ones when they came to visit her. Children and grandchildren—great grandchildren, too, as the years went on—nephews and nieces, all used to look forward to the loving greeting which they knew would await them on the very threshold of the home.

"Again and again I can picture," writes one of them, " how she would be standing at the door when we arrived, her arms stretched out in welcome." And when the time came for departure it would be just the same. " She insisted, even in her old age, upon coming to the door, and waving farewell as long as she could see us."

One glimpse more; outside in the garden this time, in the golden eventide. Husband and wife are alone together now; seated perhaps under the shadow of the cedar tree, or strolling in the sunshine up and down the lawn, or along the path leading to the stream at the far end. Or they may make a slower progress beside the flower-borders dear to them both, to note the blossoming of some cherished plant, or to pause while Mrs. Sumner clips off a dead flower or straggling leaf-spray; for the perfect order of her garden was very near to her heart. And then, perhaps, the Cathedral bells begin to chime, and they turn their steps out from the walled garden and along the flagged path to the Church door, to join together in the prayer and praise which link their earthly life and love with things eternal.

The Diamond Wedding

The Diamond Wedding Day (July 26th, 1908) found Mrs. Sumner in her 80th year, and the Bishop just 84. His health was too frail for any formal function, and the wedding-day itself, which fell on a Sunday, was commemorated only by a gathering of the innermost family circle, at the old house, and in the Cathedral.

As Mrs. Sumner wrote to a friend:—

"You little know how touched I am by the tender sympathy, love and good wishes of my beloved fellow-workers in all classes at this very eventful moment in our lives. We have our children with us, and we are simply crowned with love—affectionate letters, telegrams, flowers, gifts, and kind friends coming to wish us joy."

On the Monday a very simple presentation was made of the Diamond Wedding gift sent by the members of the Central Council of the Mothers' Union to its beloved Foundress. It took the attractive and unique form of a dwarf folding-screen inscribed with an Address, followed by the signatures of all the members of Council from all parts of the world. The collection of these must have been in itself a true labour of love, and they were inset each in its own small space in the white vellum face of the screen, in its second and third panels, and surrounded with finely illuminated borders. No pains had been spared to make the array of signatures complete, and the deep interest of the Queen and Princesses in the Mothers' Union had made it possible to include autographs from Queen Alexandra, Queen Mary (as Princess of Wales) and other Royal Patronesses. The first panel of the screen bore the Address, also illuminated, and surmounted by a miniature copy of a Raphael Madonna and Child.

Lady Horatia Erskine had had the chief share in carrying out this very gracious tribute, and it was much to her disappointment that she found herself unable to

make the presentation in person. Mrs. Herbert Morrell undertook the task, together with the Central Secretary, Mrs. Matthew, and they conveyed the screen to the Close and presented it, with appropriate congratulations to the Bishop and Mrs. Sumner, in the presence of the assembled family. It was a most brief and simple little ceremony, as Mrs. Morrell wrote to Lady Horatia Erskine.

"It was all over in five minutes, but it was a most touching little scene, and one I shall never forget. The dear old lady was too much overcome to speak. The Bishop said, 'I can't make a speech, but I do thank you,' and then they kissed each other."

The Parting.

After the Diamond Wedding came the great Albert Hall Meeting already mentioned, and then followed a time of deepening quiet in the old red house, as the shadow of parting drew more near. Mrs. Sumner found herself obliged to claim more and more exemption from the public side of her work, for "my dearest Bishop needs me," she wrote, "and he and our home must come first." Only sometimes, when her presence seemed specially needed at some meeting, would she answer the call, if one of her daughters could come to be with their father in her stead.

Almost the last of these occasions was the Mothers' Union Council Meeting in the spring of 1909, when Mrs. Sumner presided for the last time, and sent out from the Council a letter rallying the forces of the Union to a combined resistance to all attacks upon the sanctity of marriage. When the Council next met, on the 8th of December in that year, to make further plans for the campaign decided upon, Mrs. Sumner was not there. Her resignation of the Presidentship was laid before the Council, to be received with sadness made deeper by the knowledge of the sorrow that lay behind it.

The culmination of that sorrow was too imminent for the occasion to be one of many words, but Mrs. Davidson (wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury) gathered up in a few sentences the thoughts which were in the hearts of all present, with regard to their Foundress.

"The Mothers' Union owes its life to her—her personality shines out through it, and her intense burning desire that through our homes our nation's life shall increase in whatsoever is pure, and lovely, and of good report. The conception of binding mothers together in a prayerful body, holding this high standard and thus strengthening the foundations of a truly upright and religious national life, is a great one."

Very earnestly did the members of Council join that day in prayer for the Mother of the Mothers' Union, that she might be upheld in love's last silent ministry of bearing her dear one company as far as might be into the unseen.

The past months had been, as she herself described them, "one quiet sailing onwards, as it were, along a placid stream to the gates of Eternity," and when December came those gates were well-nigh reached. On December 9th husband and wife received for the last time together the blessed Sacrament which had hallowed their love through all their sixty-one years of wedded life, and then followed two days of that mysterious silence in which souls that are closely knit seem able to go forward together into the dark valley, so far as the living may penetrate its shadows.

Into that last stage of love's earthly journey no other eyes can pry, nor into the moment of parting when it comes at last, and one of the twain must return, alone, to the empty home and the busy world outside it, whilst the other goes forward into the nearer Presence of the Lord.

Bishop Sumner died on December 11th, 1909, and five days later his body was carried out of the home which

he had entered with his wife on just such a December day twenty-four years before, and was laid to rest under the shadow of the Cathedral, in the space of green beyond its eastern end.

"So at last," as the Archbishop of York wrote to Mrs. Sumner, "the end, or rather the new beginning surely, has come, and your dear husband has passed through death into life. . . .

"It must be almost impossible for you to realise that a companionship so close and beautiful, lasting unbroken for so many years, is closed. But, indeed, it cannot be closed. It can only change its conditions and its sphere. It becomes spiritual. It will soon, we cannot doubt, become eternal, yet, a vanishing of the familiar, beautiful figure, the silence of the familiar voice must be very hard to bear.

"Your friends—and among them will be thousands of women whom you have helped, by word and by living example, to realise the sanctity of marriage and the beauty of a true home—sincerely pray that the Holy Spirit Himself may comfort and strengthen and sustain you till your love and companionship is perfected in the true and lasting world."

Chapter VII

THE GREAT CAUSE

(1910—1917)

" Yet not in solitude, if Christ anear me,
Waketh Him workers for the great employ;
O not in solitude, if souls that hear me
Catch from my joyaunce the surprise of joy ! "

THE lines come to one's mind in recalling Mrs. Sumner's widowed years. They were, assuredly, neither lonely nor unhappy years, although lived, as she herself wrote, in " perpetual realisation of parting from one whose tender and unselfish love crowned my heart and life with never-failing peace and joy." Her faith in the Communion of Saints was far too real, and too radiant, not to lighten her sorrow, even at its darkest hour.

That, for one thing, and also she took her bereavement as simply as she had taken her happiness, from God's Hand, and saw in it His call for a yet fuller offering of her time and strength in His service. As her daughter tells us :—

" My mother always used to tell any who were in sorrow, through the loss of their dear ones, that work for God was the greatest solace, and she herself certainly found it so."

The two causes to which Mrs. Sumner principally gave herself during the years that remained to her were the religious education of children, and the sanctity of marriage. Or rather, it would be truer to speak of them not as two causes, but as two aspects of the one great cause to which she had consecrated all her powers—the

winning of the nation's homes for Christ her Lord. That one single aim was constantly before her, whether she threw her energies into combating influences perilous to the faith of little children, or into a strong resistance to every attempt at loosening the tie of marriage.

It was in this latter direction that her chief efforts had been directed during the last year that she was Central President, and her retirement in no way lessened the zeal with which she resumed them as soon as she was able to do so, after her husband's death. She was ill for some time during that spring of 1910, " and I remember well "—her daughter writes—" how eagerly, even in her illness, my mother would look daily for the reports of the workers who were collecting signatures to the Mothers' Union protest against the proposed ' facilities for Divorce,' and would add the numbers, day by day, to those already sent in."

A visit from Lady Horatia Erskine, early in the year, touched Mrs. Sumner deeply in its double purpose, which was to express the heartfelt sympathy of the Mothers' Union in the sorrow of their Foundress, and also to keep her in touch with the progress of the movement she had herself initiated in resistance to the proposed alterations in the Law of Divorce.

Events moved rapidly that spring, in preparation for the Royal Commission on Divorce which was to be held; and under the wise and courageous leadership of the new Central President—the Dowager Countess of Chichester—the corporate efforts started by Mrs. Sumner were effectually developed, and the Mothers' Union was able to stand forth before the world as a strong and united body of Christian women, resolute to uphold the sanctity of marriage against all attacks. The line taken by the Society as a whole, and the methods of work employed, are matters for the Mothers' Union History,

and are dealt with there (Chapter II). What neither that nor any other record can tell is the part played by Mrs. Sumner's influence, and her prayers, in all those strenuous efforts and difficult deliberations with which she identified herself as wholeheartedly as when her own hand had been at the helm.

"We are working our hardest against divorce," she wrote to one friend, ending, characteristically: "God bless us all, and inspire us mightily!"

Her pen was as busy as ever, as the packets of answers to her letters show; some from the M.P.s to whom she wrote personally; some from the highest leaders in Church and State. The letters she received from many of the Bishops bear striking witness to the value in which they held the work which the Mothers' Union was able to do in defence of the sanctity of marriage. Requests occur frequently for more copies of the leaflets sent, with a view to their circulation among the clergy.

The 7th of June, 1910, was the day fixed for the examination, at the Royal Commission on Divorce, of the three witnesses chosen to represent the Mothers' Union, and when the time of this very trying ordeal arrived, they knew that the mother-heart of their Foundress was lifted up in prayer for them.

Mrs. Sumner's own view of the position of the Mothers' Union in this matter is summed up clearly and completely in the following brief statement*:—

"We, as Christian women, must recognise the fact that we can, with the help of our husbands, and by our mutual example and influence, resist and overcome the present attack on Marriage. This we set ourselves to do, as the first object of the Mothers' Union. We hold that marriage is indissoluble, and that children, be they few or many, are an heritage and a gift that cometh of the Lord."

* From a paper on Marriage which she wrote for *Mothers in Council*, 1896.

Those were the general principles for which the Foundress of the Mothers' Union unwaveringly stood, and in defence of which she was bold to call upon the support of all Christian women whom she could in any manner reach, by her words, her influence, or her prayers.

"God only knows how earnestly I entreat the united prayer and help of every true-hearted wife, especially of every member of the Mothers' Union, for this 'first object' of our Society, because the issues of our national life, and the religious future of the English-speaking race, are formed in the homes, and founded on Christian marriage. Every wife and mother in the land can work marvels in her own home, for her husband and children, and thus win the eternal gratitude of the age in which she lives."

The manner in which these marvels were to be wrought in married life was quite clear to Mrs. Sumner. *Prayer* was, of course, the first essential, and *silence* the second. It is entirely characteristic of her method of approach to every problem, that side by side with her widest appeals to general principles she places a simple counsel for daily practice.

"It is a simple but fundamental rule for husband and wife to maintain absolute silence with regard to their mutual faults and failings.... It is impossible to suppose that any man or woman is perfect, and married people must be absolutely loyal to one another; never uttering a word to any human being as to each other's imperfections.... If there is a trial, or misunderstanding, or bad habit, which shadows daily life, there is only one Person in Whom the husband and wife may confide—to Whom they may speak quite freely—and He is the only Being Who can really help them in their difficulties. He alone can rule hearts and lives—our Lord Jesus Christ!.... Our own married life is between ourselves and God."

Homely and obvious counsel, it may sound; "old-fashioned," possibly, in its insistence upon the loyal reticence in which the writer had been brought up; but not necessarily on that account to be despised.

Religious Education.

This subject was very specially before Mrs. Sumner's mind throughout the closing years of her life. Her husband's keen interest in education had kept her in touch with the different problems which the new century brought to the fore, and enabled her to grasp their significance with a quickness which made it difficult to remember her eighty years. She was among the foremost to insist upon the need for united effort in fighting for the children's right to Christian teaching in the day schools, and in combating the evil wrought by organised anti-Christian teaching on Sundays. And both of these campaigns, she urged, were matters in which the Mothers' Union was vitally concerned.

It is worth noting that a leaflet entitled "A Grave Peril," which Mrs. Sumner wrote so far back as 1911, on the subject of anti-Christian Sunday Schools, was reprinted by the Mothers' Union in 1921 as being just what was needed at the present time. It was written with the two clear convictions in which the Foundress of the Mothers' Union never wavered. The first was that the Society could not possibly stand outside a battle for the children's faith. In her own burning words:—

"In loyalty to God, and to our Saviour Jesus Christ, we can never rest until this great sin and wrong to the children of our nation (who are the future fathers and mothers) is done away."

That was her first point, and the second was that the vital part of the battle must be fought *in the home*, and by parents themselves.

"*Parents* are the people who can resist the secularising of our schools," she wrote. "I want an *individual* propagandism in the *bad* homes, to win careless and irresponsible parents."

And again, in a letter to another friend:—

"I know the terrible anti-Christian teaching that is being given, and that much is being done in many directions against it, but I do implore those who desire to work against it thoroughly to try to get hold of *parents* as well as *children*. For the poor children go back from Christian teaching into homes where all true Faith is treated with scorn and defiance; and it is in the *home*—by the example and teaching of parents—that the character of children is formed, and their religious faith is taught."

That was, unwaveringly, the line of her appeal, in rallying her fellow-members in the Mothers' Union to defend their children's faith against these growing perils.

"Oh! do get hold of the fathers and mothers!" she entreats in another letter, enclosing a prayer which she herself, in her dauntless fashion, had prayed daily for weeks and months—"even for two years"—for different parents, "and it has been answered by absolute change of heart and life.... The days we are living in are very alarming, but God is with us, and in the strength of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall overcome."

The next passage is from a letter which Mrs. Sumner wrote to several Bishops during the autumn of 1910:—

"The root of a national reformation is in the hands of parents and the *Home*—God's place for the character-training of His human creatures .... I feel sick at heart that fathers, as well as mothers, are not looked upon as the great character-trainers of our race. Let us strive to get them, by the grace of God, awakened in *all* homes, rich and poor, and we shall strike at the very heart of irreligion and unbelief."

Letter after letter, to friends and fellow-workers, is

filled with the eager longing to rouse others to join in the conflict to which she was giving herself unstintingly.

"I am living in prayer that we may gain support for our efforts to raise the Christian standard of teaching in all schools .... May God inspire us! and let the one great object of the Mothers' Union be to wake up conscience in fathers, mothers and children, in every home, by ceaseless prayer and intercession, self-sacrifice, and dedication to Christ our Lord."

As she wrote elsewhere, in words which might well serve to sum up her own way of working:—

"*Prayer* and *dogged work* will win the day!"

Home Teaching.

Side by side with Mrs. Sumner's appeals for concerted action, in the matter of religious education, there went always her practical counsels with regard to the mother's own especial task of giving her little ones their first, simplest and most important lessons in the Faith of Christ. It was one of the subjects upon which she liked best to speak; drawing always upon the practical results of her own experience.

The following passage is from her address to the Central Literature Conference, in 1912:—

"I should also like to give a few simple words from my own experience.

"How to teach religion to little children? I have no hesitation in giving the answer. It is by teaching them about the Personality of Christ Himself. There is no fascination so great to a child—as, indeed, to us all—as the Personality of Christ. I shall never forget how my own children were struck by it, when I did not think they could understand; how almost at once they realised the love of our Blessed Saviour, and the beauty of their consecration to Him in Baptism; how intensely they loved the idea of being His

little soldiers and servants; how they felt that they had His help in every moment of temptation and difficulty."

The aptitude of a little child's mind for religion was a point upon which Mrs. Sumner continually insisted. As she wrote elsewhere:—

"There is no greater mistake than to suppose that young children cannot grasp the fundamental truths of the Christian Faith. Every child seems to have a religious instinct, a desire for God, and a conscience which is divinely constituted to love the good and hate the evil. His faith is as strong an instinct as his appetite. He naturally seeks for nourishment; he naturally clings to and trusts his mother; and he as naturally desires to know and love his Father in heaven Who created Him, His Saviour Who died for him, and the Holy Spirit Who helps him to fight against all sin.

"But the Christian Faith rests specially on a Person, and therefore, when instructing the child in the Creed of the Christian, it is all important to give him the *concrete*, and not the *abstract*, in religion.

"Parents will best learn how to teach and train their children by themselves taking their place at the feet of the Lord Jesus, and observing His attitude towards children—His love, His tenderness, His sympathy for them."

From this thought of how parents may learn to teach their children there followed the thought of the training which they themselves should gain in the process.

"Who can doubt that teaching the true faith to our children has a strong reflex action upon our own minds and characters, and that as parents we should be better men and women if we obeyed faithfully the command which has come down to us through the ages from God Himself, to teach our children the Faith handed down to us, 'that their posterity might know it.' It is one of the most imperative of all religious duties to hand down the knowledge of God's laws to the next generation, and this is the bounden duty of fathers as well as mothers —nothing can relieve them of it."

A Personal Reminiscence.

In addition to all the writing and speaking which Mrs. Sumner herself did in the great cause of Religious Education, she was continually endeavouring to secure addresses from other speakers versed in the subject. The following reminiscence by Mrs. George Chitty, of a visit undertaken for this purpose, gives us another glimpse—and a very delightful one—into the quiet home life in which Mrs. Sumner's untiring activities had their root and their power:—

"In the early days of the War it fell to my lot to be sent by the M.U. to Winchester, to help in a Conference on Home Religious Training. Mrs. Sumner at once wrote to invite me, stranger though I was, to stay with her, and of course I gratefully accepted. The memories of that visit are still distinct and vivid, for it has left an impression of absolute peace and serenity which must, one imagines, have been entirely characteristic of that well-ordered home.

"I arrived in the morning, in order to have time to settle the details of the meeting, but Mrs. Sumner at once with gentle firmness insisted on rest and refreshment for her guest, in a peaceful bedroom full of old-world books and pictures, and looking out on the grey Cathedral. Later came a quiet talk with the hostess, one of whose keenest interests for so many years had been the very subject chosen for the afternoon's Conference.

"I can never forget the quiet intensity with which Mrs. Sumner spoke, at that gathering, of the topics nearest to her heart, nor the passionate longing of her voice as she urged the paramount need of religion in English home-life, and begged the younger workers to concentrate all efforts upon this.

"It was impossible to think of age and infirmity as one looked at her kindling face or heard the vibrant tones of that beautiful voice, or noted the gentle scorn with which she repudiated (for herself) the need of any rest during a long and busy day. She told me how she had trained her body to 'endure hardship' by early rising, cold baths, and strenuous physical

exercises, so that now in her old age she could stand with impunity fatigue and exposure which many younger women could not face.

"After the public meeting, we returned to the 'haunt of ancient peace' in the Close, and again the feeling of restful calm and serenity stole over one, remaining throughout the evening.

"Mrs. Sumner played to us after dinner, and even accompanied songs with much zest and vigour, and finally she played the evening hymn for family prayers, when the old servants filed into the drawing room, and one could distinguish her voice, still sweet and true, as she led the singing.

"Next morning before the brief visit ended, I was almost overwhelmed by her thoughtful kindness, and touched to the heart by the solicitous care with which each little detail which could minister to a visitor's comfort was personally seen to and carried out. The scrupulous courtesy of an earlier age seemed to surround one all the time, and in Mrs. Sumner it was combined with a keen interest in the movements of the day, and an eager desire to grasp all she could of the new generation's outlook and hopes. Perhaps the most touching incident of a deeply interesting visit was the loving kiss and blessing given at parting to the younger woman whom she so solemnly charged to carry on the great crusade for Christ amongst the mothers of England."

The Cathedral Buttresses

Along the outside of Winchester Cathedral, against the South wall of the Nave, a row of massive stone buttresses were built, some ten years ago, for the support of the massive fabric. Some of these have been erected as memorials to individual upholders of the Faith in bygone years. Thus one bears the name of Ken, one that of Keble, while yet another has been simply dedicated as "a Thank-offering." Upon two more the following inscriptions are engraved on brass plates:—

On the first:

"TO THE GLORY OF GOD, AND IN MEMORY OF
GEORGE HENRY SUMNER, BISHOP OF GUILDFORD,
THE GUIDE AND COUNSELLOR OF HIS WIFE, MARY ELIZABETH SUMNER,
IN THE FOUNDING AND WORK OF THE MOTHERS' UNION,
THIS BUTTRESS IS GIVEN BY MEMBERS OF THE MOTHERS' UNION
THROUGHOUT THE BRITISH EMPIRE:
A.D. 1912."

On the second:

"TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN GRATITUDE TO
MARY ELIZABETH SUMNER, FOUNDER OF THE MOTHERS' UNION, A.D. 1885,
THIS BUTTRESS IS GIVEN BY MEMBERS OF THE MOTHERS' UNION THROUGHOUT
THE BRITISH EMPIRE, IN RECOGNITION OF HER WORK FOR THE
SANCTITY OF HOME LIFE. A.D. 1912."

The idea of giving one buttress, as a memorial to Bishop Sumner, was started soon after his death, and was taken up so eagerly by members of the Mothers' Union in all parts of the world, that at the end of the year set for the collection of the sum it was found that enough had been contributed to pay for *two* buttresses instead of one. The total amount subscribed reached finally a total of about £1250, out of which, after both buttresses had been paid for, there still remained a sum of some £250, which was handed over, by Mrs. Sumner's desire, to the central funds of the Mothers' Union, to be used in promoting the work Overseas.

Mrs. Sumner was profoundly touched by this beautiful memorial to her husband's memory, and to the work she had been allowed to do for God, in the nation's homes. The sight of the buttresses never failed to thrill her with pleasure and thankfulness, and it was from the depths of her heart that she wrote, in her personal letter of gratitude to "the Presidents, Vice-Presidents, and Enrolling Members, and all Members or Associates of the Mothers' Union who have so generously given two of the Buttresses supporting the South wall of Winchester Cathedral":—

"It is quite impossible to express in words my profound gratitude to you for a Memorial which is a mark of your personal

love and sympathy in my life-work, and also of your recognition of my Bishop's guidance and support in it.

To me, the Memorial represented by the two Buttresses which are helping to strengthen our beautiful Cathedral will always be inexpressibly precious—assuring me as it does that you are heart to heart with me in the aims and objects of the Mothers' Union, and in the efforts we are making to win every Home in the Empire for God.

No day of my life passes without earnest prayer for every Member of the Mothers' Union.

Although I cannot hope to see you all and thank you personally for your great and valued gift, will you accept this letter as a proof of my love and gratitude, and I look forward to the day when, God grant, we may all meet in the Perfect Home above."

A Northern Tour.

It is amusing to come across one of the letters received by Mrs. Sumner in these years, from an old gentleman from whom she had sought to gain some active support in her labours, pleading as the reason for his refusal the fact that he had "now joined the Octogenarian Club" and might therefore be excused from any fresh exertions. The Foundress of the Mothers' Union assuredly did not regard her eighty-four years in that light when she set off, in 1913, for one of the longest and most important "speaker's tours" she had ever made. The sundering of the beloved home-tie enabled her to extend her absence longer than she could formerly have done, and the passing of the years only fired her with fresh ardour to do her uttermost in the great cause of winning for God the nation's homes.

Her visits were in the North of England, and were a wonderful series of personal triumphs at the close of her career as a speaker. In Southwell, in Newark—where she addressed a large Sunday afternoon gathering of men—

Durham, Sunderland, and all the other northern towns at which she spoke, it was the same story. Crowds of women—often of men also—thronged about her, not only in the halls where she spoke, but outside also, in the street as she came out, and along the road as she drove away; eager to get a touch of the hand if possible, or at least a word, a look, a smile.

The climax was reached at York, where the Mothers' Union Conference was held that year, and where thousands of members of the Union congregated therefore, during the week. On the day of the large meetings held simultaneously in different halls, Mrs. Sumner drove from one to the other, to say a few words at each, and all who witnessed her course from place to place agree that it was like nothing so much as a royal progress.

Retirement.

That tour was Mrs. Sumner's farewell to the North; indeed it was the end of any extensive journeying. Next year came the Great War, with its disorganisation of travelling, as of graver matters, and Mrs. Sumner's external activities gradually lessened, although not her zeal for the cause.

Those years brought personal sorrows also to her, in the death of her two sons-in-law. Canon Gore-Browne died in 1914, and Sir Arthur Heywood in 1916. Lady Heywood's health, too, was a great anxiety to her mother, and prevented their meeting as often as they both desired. Mrs. Sumner had, however, the comfort of frequent visits from her younger daughter, and from her son, Mr. Heywood Sumner, and his wife.

She still carried on as much work as she could do for the Mothers' Union, but in 1916 she resigned the office of Diocesan President, which she had held for thirty years. At the July meeting of the Winchester Diocesan

Council of the Mothers' Union, Mrs. Sumner announced her resignation. She felt, as she said, "that the time has come for a younger hand to guide the helm in this great Diocese, although I lose none of my interest in the work of the Mothers' Union, which I started with the approval and help of my beloved husband, the late Bishop of Guildford, in 1885....

"....I have received a most kind letter from the Bishop of Winchester, which has greatly comforted me in the sadness which I naturally feel in resigning my position as President in this Diocese, but I still hope to be of use to my beloved Mothers' Union in many ways.

"I do pray that it may ever be treated as a religious Society, its great object being to recognise *the Home* as a sacred Institution ordained by God....

"....Since the year 1885 the greatest object of my life, outside my family, has been to try and win parents and homes for God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and that every father and mother should know the Creed of the Christian, and live it in prayer and self-dedication of heart and soul, according to the Divine Prayer:—

"O Lord, fill me with Thy Holy Spirit,
For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

Numberless expressions of affection and regret, needless to say, reached Mrs. Sumner from the friends and fellow-workers to whom her resignation was a great and personal loss, voicing in different forms the thoughts contained in the letter from the Bishop of Winchester:—

"Farnham Castle,
July 5th, 1916.

My dear Mrs. Sumner,

I shall not trouble you with many words; but I cannot let your memorable reign as President, and Inaugurator, of our Diocesan Mothers' Union end without a word of respect and gratitude and affection.

The life of our Church has been witness—if man may judge—of no steadier, more faithful, more strenuous efforts to help its service to God and man; no steadier, and very few as steady.

You have set up a standard before English folk—Church-folk especially—of what Home Life should be; of its potencies and resources for good; of the need and duty that we should not only do our several individual duties with regard to it, but that it should be a matter of our united effort to witness to its ideals and responsibilities and to warn of the dangers to which it is exposed.

And through sunshine and shadow, with spirit unbroken by sorrow and loneliness, you have consecrated the gifts of speech and influence and energy, with which God endowed you, to an unflagging service which has been an astonishment and an example to us all.

The work is now established: I hope that through and after the National Mission it may enter upon a new period of even wider life and energy.

Believe me, with our united love and respect, and with the prayer that God may give you the Blessing of Peace.

Yours very sincerely,

EDW: WINTON:

Chapter VIII

"THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMETH"

(1917—1921)

"A little longer yet—patience, belovèd!—
A little longer yet ere Heaven unroll
The glory and the brightness and the wonder,
Eternal and divine, that wait thy soul."

A YEAR after Mrs. Sumner's retirement from the Winchester Presidentship she made one more journey to London, to take part in a very simple ceremony of very deep significance. This was the opening and dedication, on the 6th of June, 1917, of the first "Mary Sumner House," to be not merely the central office, but the *home* of the Mothers' Union; a mother house, to which all hearts could turn, and where all would be remembered in the prayers offered daily in the little chapel.

A simple and homely house it is, in the quiet "Dean's Yard" that is part of Westminster Abbey's precincts, so that in this first home of its own, as in the Close at Winchester, the Mothers' Union has been associated with one of the churches most closely linked with the life and history of the Nation. This is not the place in which to enter into the details of the whole great scheme whereof that Westminster house was to be dedicated as the first-fruits. Such matters belong to the history of the Society rather than of its Foundress, and are there dealt with as fully as may be. What no history can record are the innumerable gifts and sacrifices, great and small, which had gone to make possible the planning and achievement

of the first Mary Sumner House, under the wise and untiring leadership of Mrs. Wilberforce as Central President.

It was a happy coincidence that the friend who had been so closely associated with the beginning of Mrs. Sumner's public life should be linked, in a very special sense, with its close. As Central President of the Mothers' Union, Mrs. Wilberforce had been able to keep its Foundress in close personal touch with the details of the new venture, and there is a singular fitness in the fact that to her pen we owe the account, given a little farther on, of the actual opening ceremony.

It was a long time since Mrs. Sumner had been to London, but nothing would keep her away from the new Home when the 6th of June arrived, and Mrs. Gore Browne tells us how thoroughly her mother enjoyed taking once more the familiar journey from Winchester. Her 88 years had not destroyed her keen and ready interest in her surroundings.

"It was wonderful to see her quick notice of the changes made by the War, and her pleasure in again passing through the well-known stretch of country between Winchester and London. For some time past her thoughts and prayers had been filled with the thought of the Dedication, and she would not have missed it for the world. Again and again, as we took our way to Westminster, I saw her lips moving in prayer, and could even catch a word sometimes of praise or thanksgiving."

The arrival at the Mary Sumner House was purposely made some time before the opening ceremony, so as to give time for quiet and rest. The large Annual Meeting, which was being held that afternoon at Chelsea, had carried off most of the staff, as well as the members of Council, so the house was nearly empty when Mrs. Sumner

and her daughter entered it. Mrs. Woodward, who received them, suggested a little rest in a quiet room where tea was prepared; but that, the Foundress of the Mothers' Union said gently, must not be the first thing she did.

"I have heard, my dear, that there is a chapel in this dear house," she said, with her radiant smile. "I must go there, first of all."

To the chapel, accordingly, she was conducted before she would look at anything else, and, walking forward alone to the step before the little altar, she knelt there for a while in silence, her face uplifted in communion with the Lord to Whom her whole heart was going forth in prayer and thankfulness. The light of His Presence shone in her eyes and in her smile when she rose presently and said very quietly, as she left the chapel:

"I have been praying for every one of my children, all over the world."

The Opening Ceremony.

Short account by Mrs. Wilberforce.

"June 6th, 1917, must ever be a memorable day in the history of the Mothers' Union. In glorious sunshine it began for us under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, at the Celebration of the Holy Communion wherein, through Him Who gave Himself for us, we touch one another and those already within the veil.

"In the early afternoon we gathered in the Chelsea Town Hall for our Annual Meeting, which was followed, at 5.30, by the long-looked-for event, the opening and dedication of the Mary Sumner House.

"On our return from the Meeting it was a great joy to find that our beloved Foundress had arrived, and she became at once the centre of the many friends eager to greet and welcome her. Neither the journey from Winchester nor the heat of a midsummer day seemed to have

fatigued her, and she entered with all her old enthusiasm into the proceedings which had brought us together. It gave her unbounded pleasure that the opening ceremony was to be performed by Princess Christian, Her Royal Highness having graciously consented thus to show her interest in the Mothers' Union, whereof she had long been the Patron in the London Diocese. To Mrs. Sumner the presence of one of Queen Victoria's daughters bore a special fitness on that occasion, as linking the new enterprise with the revered memory of the great Sovereign who had been the Society's first Royal Patron.

"The Princess arrived with royal punctuality, and was received by the Bishop of London, in Convocation robes, together with our Foundress, myself as Central President, the Vice-Presidents and the Central Secretary (Mrs. Maude), the Dean of Westminster and the Hon. Evelyn Hubbard. The brief opening ceremony took place in the lecture room, where members of the Central Council and other guests were assembled.

"It fell to my lot, as Central President, to begin with an address of welcome to Her Royal Highness, in the course of which I touched briefly upon some of the chief purposes which we trusted to see fulfilled in the Mary Sumner House:—

"The work of the Mothers' Union has hitherto been entirely concentrated upon efforts to raise the religious and moral tone of the homes of our country; but now, when the country is passing through such a crucial time, and when young children must be looked upon as the most valuable asset of the Empire, we feel it an imperative duty to utilise our large organisation in promoting the physical as well as the spiritual and moral welfare of mothers and children.

"In moving into this House we gain the much required additional space for our Central Offices, and shall endeavour to combine the three-fold nature of our work by providing lectures and instruction on religious and moral education,

character training and moral instruction, and other subjects relating to the vocation of motherhood in its many aspects.

"The presence of your Royal Highness to-day is an honour which the whole Mothers' Union will deeply appreciate. Not in Great Britain alone, but in many countries Overseas, motherly hearts will rejoice to know that the daughter of the great Queen-Mother, Queen Victoria, has shown this practical interest in the Mothers' Union.

"....We are much stimulated in our work by the noble example, in all appertaining to home life, set by our King and Queen, and we especially cherish the memory of the words spoken by His Majesty at the time of his accession to the throne—words which contain all that the Mothers' Union stands for—'The foundations of national glory are set in the homes of the people; they will only remain unshaken while the family life of our race and nation is simple, strong and pure.'"

"Princess Christian then performed the simple ceremony of declaring the Mary Sumner House open, and the Bishop of London proposed a vote of thanks to Her Royal Highness, and spoke briefly of the national importance of the work of the Mothers' Union. Mrs. Sumner followed his words of sympathy and encouragement with her own expression of gratitude, and when he called upon the 'Mother of the Mothers' Union' to second the vote, she stood before us in the erect, simple attitude we knew so well, and spoke her heartfelt thanks to the Princess, and her own joy in being present on an occasion so full of significance to herself and to the work she loved. Her voice seemed to ring out with all its old force and beauty as she ended in the name of all her fellow-workers:—

"We pray earnestly that our Heavenly Father will pour out His Holy Spirit daily and hourly, for Jesus Christ's sake, on all the *work* and *workers* in this House, for the spreading of our Christian Faith in the hearts and homes of our beloved Nation and Empire."

"Then followed the short service of Dedication in the chapel, closed by a prayer of benediction from the Bishop, that God would grant to ourselves and our fellow-workers courage, wisdom, strength and love to do His will; and after that the Bishop visited each room in the house, blessing its special work and those who were carrying it forward.

"It was indeed an occasion of deep rejoicing and humble thanksgiving to Almighty God, and our hearts were full when the time for farewells arrived. Dear Mrs. Sumner, alert and vigorous as she had been at the beginning, took leave of each one of us individually, and expressed repeatedly her joy at having been present. We accompanied her, with her daughter, to the carriage, and stood watching as she drove away, turning to wave her loving adieux again and again so long as she was in sight." E. W.

A Few Letters.

There Mrs. Wilberforce's narrative ends, but I have her leave to complete it with a few sentences from a letter which she wrote next day to Mrs. Sumner.

"....It just put the coping-stone on everything to have you with us yesterday! and we all so rejoiced both to see and hear you. We have had a very happy, useful week, and we thanked our Heavenly Father for all His goodness to us, in the little chapel this morning. His Banner of Love has been and, I trust, ever will be over us.

"May God ever bless and keep you, our beloved Foundress."

Mrs. Sumner's letter I give in full:—

"The Close, Winchester,
Dearest Mrs. Wilberforce, June 7th, 1917.

I should like to express my deep thankfulness to God, and then to you, my beloved President, and to our fellow-members and friends, who have helped in founding the 'Mary

Sumner House,' which has now been so graciously opened by H.R.H. Princess Christian and solemnly consecrated to the work of the Mothers' Union by the dear Bishop of London.

May the blessing of God Almighty rest upon it for evermore.

May the mothers of our nation be impressed with their great responsibility. May all their children be dedicated as 'Soldiers of Christ' in Holy Baptism and trained by the example of Christian parents in the homes, to the glory of God, and to the blessing of our great Empire.

May I add a word of profound gratitude that my name has been allowed to be on a building which represents one of the great objects of my life, in which my beloved husband, the late Bishop of Guildford, always gave me such constant help and inspiration? I pray earnestly that our Heavenly Father will pour out His Holy Spirit, daily and hourly, on all the work and workers in this House for the spreading of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the family life and homes of our Empire.

With renewed thanks to you and to all who are helping us,

I am your very affectionate,

MARY E. SUMNER."

A few passages may fitly be added from Mrs. Sumner's letters to other friends:—

"I was so deeply thankful to be at the Dedication of our dear House yesterday; and it was all so beautifully arranged and full of deep feeling, and the dear Bishop's solemn Benediction will be a lasting Blessing on us all.... My heart is so on fire for a mighty Blessing on this House now given to the service of our Heavenly Father, our precious Saviour and the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost."

"Oh, may God in His Love, crown our new House with countless Blessings! It is very near my heart, and fills me with thankfulness. I long to know how yesterday was considered by many of my dear fellow Mothers' Union members, for it was indeed an appropriate time to dedicate it in solemn prayer to our Heavenly Father and our Precious Saviour that it might be filled with the Divine Spirit!"

"....All concerning the new House fills me with profound gratitude, and God grant it may ever be carried on in a Spiritual Life to the Glory of God, and our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, and that every heart working in this House may be inspired by the Holy Spirit, full of love and zeal."

The Ministry of Prayer.

Very characteristic these letters are, not only of Mrs. Sumner's interest in the house bearing her name, but also of the burning intensity of the prayers wherein that interest found expression. It was the same with all parts of the work of the Mothers' Union. The more restricted its Foundress came to be in the matter of active efforts, the more continuously did she live in and for the work of intercession.

That was her own phrase, used constantly, and with literal truth. "I am living in daily and earnest prayer about my beloved Mothers' Union," she wrote to one friend, and to another:—

"It is so wonderful to realise how our Mothers' Union is growing all over the world, in many countries, in answer to constant and earnest prayer! I live in such earnest prayer about it all...."

The next few passages are taken from different letters written by Mrs. Sumner in these latter days, and they all reveal the same triumphant faith in the *power* of prayer, and the same untiring zeal in its practice.

"....I and a certain number of earnest friends are praying daily for our present Government.... I want to live in prayer for them."

"....We are living in anxious days, and we believe that our duty is to live in prayer."

"....I am laid up with a severe cold, but I can do many things still, with the help of my God.... It does so cheer me to feel your great enthusiasm for our efforts to win the Nation,

heart and soul, to God. I had the following striking and solemn prayer given me on Easter morning:—

"'All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for Thee; and every life I touch do Thou by Thy Spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live. In the Name of Jesus. *Amen.*'"

"....May God inspire us! and let the one great object of our Mothers' Union be to wake up conscience in Fathers and Mothers and children, in every home, by ceaseless prayer, intercession, self-sacrifice, unworldliness and dedication of life to Christ our Lord."

"....With prayer there will be no straining, no morbid anxiety. Prayer brings Christ's influence. He knows and understands, and, if we pray, He will give the needed patience and strength. From prayer we shall derive confidence."

Prayer was indeed "the fountain of her inspiration that lasted on, springing up still in that sunlit upper room when the day for speaking was past."

I quote once more from the Bishop of Southampton's memories of Mrs. Sumner,* in which he gives just a glimpse of a visit to her in these latter days.

"She sat in her pleasant drawing room and spoke of her own growing limitations in the work she loved. But only for a moment. She passed on to the need and wondrous power of intercession, and how, resting in that very room, she knew what share she could take. She rose to her feet and standing in the middle of the floor poured out a rapture of hope and enthusiasm on the promises to prayer.

"So we left her; the last memory is of one on her feet in the sunlight, praising God...."

"Concerning Grandmothers."

This ministry of prayer, to which Mrs. Sumner gave herself so unremittingly in her old age, was the share which she felt that all the older members of the Mothers'

* *Winchester Diocesan Chronicle*, October, 1921.

Union should specially take in its work. She had written years ago on this subject, in a paper "Concerning Grandmothers," * which it is interesting to compare with her own practice. Only a few paragraphs can find space here.

"We are constantly asked to solve the problem which seems to exercise the minds of some of the older members in our Society, as to the value and position of grandmothers in the national work of the Mothers' Union, and I should like to show that their value and influence is strong, definable, and all-important to the success of our efforts. . . .

". . . . Let no one despise middle age or old age. If it is stamped with a reflection of the Divine Life, it has a beauty and an influence all its own. The power of the high-minded grandmother who is consistent in her faith and practice, and who has the courage of her opinions is greater than we can conceive. . . .

". . . . The Mothers' Union is above all things a Prayer Union. It was founded in prayer, initiated with prayer, built up in prayer. The forces which are working and moving throughout the length and breadth of the Mothers' Union are alive through prayer. The daily united supplication rising up into the ears of the Almighty Saviour from thousands of hearts, in thousands of homes, is the secret of our strength, of our marvellous success, for 'He always wins who sides with God.' Therefore prayer is the greatest power, for 'it moves the hand that moves the world,' and older women—grandmothers—even if they are invalids, are probably helping us more than the most brilliant speakers and active workers among the younger members, if they strengthen our work by prayer.

* * * * * *

"If only we would expect great results and answers to our prayers, we should win hundreds of hearts and homes that now seem impossible, for the days of miracles are not over, and who can tell the far-reaching impressions which are made by older people, nearing the eternal world calmly, in

* *Mothers in Council*, 1903.

confidence, faith, peace, and beauty, with the halo upon them of a life spent well and wisely, the retrospect of a perfect union in married life, the faithful training of children, and of a home ruled in wisdom and love. Such a life is an object lesson to younger wives and mothers, and may stir them to go and do likewise. Special honour should be given to age when it is crowned with good works."

It was this intense belief in the power of prayer, and in the vocation of old age to that especial ministry, which led Mrs. Sumner to resist with all her might any proposals as to a possible "age-limit" for membership in the Mothers' Union. To one who brought forward such a suggestion, in these later years, she wrote strongly:—

"I am afraid .... that you have hardly realised the double basis of our Mothers' Union—Prayer and Work. The grandmothers and great-grandmothers whom you mention have more time in their old age to pray for 'children and children's children,' and we have always felt that these prayers uphold and strengthen the younger mothers in their anxious work of training their little ones, and that they bring untold blessing on the whole Society.

"It would be a fatal weakness to oust these aged members, and, speaking from personal knowledge of our members, I know how enormously they value the great bond of union in prayer.

"Mothers of all ages are needed to raise the spiritual life of the country, and of course our motherhood does not cease with age.... The grand work of Intercession can be better carried out in the quiet of old age than in the rush of youth."

No one who knew Mrs. Sumner will dream that this plea for the ministry of the older mothers meant any disregard of the needs, and the value, of the younger ones, who were always so near her heart; but it is of interest, in this connexion, to note that the very last leaflet she wrote, in 1920,* had for its special object the enlisting of

* *An Appeal to Educated Mothers.*

fresh supporters from the ranks of young mothers, for the uplift of Christian motherhood.

"There is special need for enlisting the interest and help of the young mothers of to-day, for they have to meet the many new problems both in religious and in social questions, and their advice and co-operation is of the greatest use in dealing with these difficulties."

In a letter of about the same date she says:—

"....I am striving in prayer to awaken the conscience of all young mothers to realise their great responsibility in the gift, from Almighty God, of a little immortal soul.... May God the Father and our Blessed Saviour hear our earnest prayers, and pour a mighty spiritual power on all we are striving to do for our beloved country."

The 90th Birthday.

Mrs. Sumner's 90th birthday was celebrated on December 31st, 1918.

"Such a wonderful birthday!" as she wrote to a friend. "Letters, telegrams and cards of good wishes from beloved relations, friends, and kind believers in my Mothers' Union. Oh! I do thank God! and will you pray about the *longing* so many of us feel, concerning the entire conversion of *hearts* and *lives* to our Heavenly Father and our Precious Saviour .... It will be so lovely to meet in Heaven the dear friends who are now giving their lives to God! Pray for me, my dear friend."

A birthday message arrived from the Queen herself, together with a signed photograph of Her Majesty; a gracious remembrance, which Mrs. Sumner deeply valued. The letters which reached her were from all parts, from individual friends and from the Dioceses. From the Winchester Diocesan Council of the Mothers' Union came a specially personal expression of gratitude for "the great work you have done for the mothers of the world,

We are proud to know that our Mothers' Union had its inception in this Diocese."

From the Mary Sumner House the Central President wrote:—

"How good God has been in sparing you to us through these many years, to be such an inspiration to lead us higher! We thank Him, too, for making your eventide so full of light."

The Last Meeting.

It was during the summer of 1919 that Mrs. Sumner addressed her last meeting. She was staying at Botley with her daughter, Mrs. Gore Browne, who invited the neighbouring members of the Mothers' Union to tea in her garden, after which Mrs. Sumner had promised to speak to them.

She prepared beforehand, in her usual fashion, by a quiet hour of prayer, and when tea-time came she went among the guests, speaking individually to as many as she could, and at the close gave one of her earnest, direct addresses to them all together, as they sat in the garden. The fact of speaking in the open air did not trouble her, in spite of her 90 years, and every word could be heard easily by all present.

The New Central President.

A year later Mrs. Sumner was again staying with her daughter when she received a visit from Mrs. Hubert Barclay on the appointment of the latter to be Central President of the Mothers' Union when Mrs. Wilberforce found herself obliged to lay down the task. Of that visit Mrs. Barclay herself wrote a short account, which fittingly completes the story of Mrs. Sumner's life-work.*

* Reprinted from the *Workers' Paper*, September, 1921.

"Last summer, after having been appointed Central President, I went to see her. She was not at the moment at her beautiful home under the shadow of Winchester Cathedral, but staying with her daughter at Botley, in Hampshire. She welcomed me most sweetly, and at once asked me many questions about the Mothers' Union. The whole note of her talk struck me as being so loving, as though her heart was overflowing with love for all the mothers, and she was keenly interested in every detail of the work. She spoke as one who knew and understood the difficulties of a mother's life, and sympathized with every part of it. Her mind was wonderfully clear and her beautiful face alight with keenness and emotion. She repeated herself somewhat, as is the way of those whose earthly life has been prolonged, and one sentence which she repeated over and over again was a message—a personal message to the mothers she loved so well.

"'Tell them'—she said it earnestly over and over again—'tell them that it is the first seven years of a child's life that are so important. Tell them it is the first seven years.' She saw so clearly that those are the years in which the seed is sown in the fertile garden of a child's mind for good or ill, to bring forth either wheat or tares.

"When we had talked for some time her daughter thoughtfully suggested I should rest after my journey, and Mrs. Sumner at once urged me to do so, adding, 'And while you are gone I shall just sit and pray.' And so I left her engaged in holding up the Mothers' Union and every member of it—its activities, its difficulties, and its hopes before the Throne of Grace.

"That was her constant occupation.

"The day will always remain in my memory, and I recall so well how, during the train journey back to London, I thought it all over. It is very seldom that any woman lives to see a work she has been instrumental in starting go forward and grow into a work of such magnitude as it was granted to Mrs. Sumner to see in the Mothers' Union and its steady growth from such a small beginning until it became as it is now, a world-wide organization of national importance, and I asked myself, 'How was it?'

"I am certain the answer is this—How wonderfully God can and does use a wholly consecrated life. A life which knew one purpose, and one purpose only, namely, to do His will—to be used by Him—emptied of self and self-seeking to live for Christ, by Christ, and through Christ. Her heart was filled with love for her Master, and by the power of His Holy Spirit she radiated love—God's love—on all those with whom she came in contact."

The Journey's End.

Mrs. Barclay's visit took place in the summer of 1920, and soon afterwards Mrs. Sumner was home again under the shadow of her beloved Cathedral, rejoicing in its services so long as she could share in them. As she wrote to a friend at Christmas-time:—

"I am so enjoying my Cathedral Services, and the dear family around me."

The love of her children, always so intensely precious to her, came to be more than ever her comfort and delight as the passing months increased the burden of her weakness. Her letters continually expressed the thankfulness she felt in the exceeding happiness of having "my beloved son and his wife," or "my dearest Loulie" with her. It was a great grief both to herself and to Lady Heywood, her elder daughter, that the failing health of the latter made it impossible for her to be much with her mother during these last days.

The affection of other relatives, and of the many friends who gathered round her, Mrs. Sumner also prized with all her old eagerness of appreciation, and she would often speak of the debt of gratitude which she owed to the members of her household. All of them had lived with her for very many years, and they loved to serve her with care and devotion that she appreciated and valued to the full. The evening shadows gathering round that quiet home could not quench the light that glowed within it.

Never, even in its brightest days, had it been more truly a "home of peace and love" than through those months of deepening silence, when all who lived in the house, or came to it, found happiness in tender ministry to her who had ministered so freely and so lovingly to others all her life.

Mrs. Sumner's wonderful vitality enabled her to carry on the ordinary routine of life until the summer of 1921. She took the most intense interest in all the arrangements for the Mothers' Union Conference held in Chester early in June, and was kept closely in touch with the details of these by Mrs. W. H. Johnson, the Diocesan President for Chester. The last two letters penned by her hand related to the Conference, and to her constant prayers for God's blessing upon it. To Mrs. Johnson she wrote just beforehand, on May 30th:—

"....I shall indeed pray for a great blessing on all the meetings which will be held.... May God grant a great blessing on all the efforts that are being made to help forward the Christian life of our land.

"I am so glad there is to be a joint meeting for husbands and wives; we do so want to get the help of husbands and fathers."

To Mrs. Hubert Barclay, as Central President, she wrote, on June 9th:—

"I am delighted to get the telegram with the kind messages from the Council and Mass Meeting. I do indeed trust that every blessing has been given to the great gathering at Chester, and that a great increase in the Mothers' Union work will be the result.

"How I wish I could have been with you all during this week!"

She had been with us, we knew well, every day in thought and prayer, and when the week was over she made her offering of thanksgiving, on behalf of the whole

Mothers' Union, on Sunday in the Cathedral. That was the last time she entered its doors in life, and it was an occasion full of joy for her, accompanied as she was by her son and one daughter and other dear ones, and with her heart full of rejoicing in the great things God was accomplishing in and through her "dear daughters throughout the world."

Of the eight weeks that followed Mrs. Gore Browne has told all that the outside world can ask to know, in a brief reminiscence from which I have her leave to quote.

"As long as possible my mother used to get up and be dressed, and come to the drawing room in the course of the morning, and I would read aloud to her, from the Bible, very often, or from some favourite book on the subjects nearest to her heart. Sometimes she would go to the piano, and she still played so beautifully, but only by heart, the same things over and over again, but very pretty ones, and she would improvise on them.

"Often she liked us to have prayers together, and would ask for our Mothers' Union prayer, and sometimes she would sit quietly praying in her arm-chair. She would lift up her hands very often in an attitude of supplication, and now and then held them out, as though presenting something to God.

"'What would you like?' I used to ask her sometimes, and the answer always was, 'Prayer! prayer!' She constantly repeated the lines—

> 'Jesu, my Lord, I Thee adore,
> O make me love Thee more and more!'

She always liked our hymn at prayers in the evening to have something about Jesus Christ in it.

"She loved walking in the garden, as long as it was possible, with me, or with her devoted maid, enjoying her flowers and talking to the gardener, who, like every

one else about her, was always anxious for the chance of serving her in any way.

"In the evenings she would get me to play or sing to her, or she would go herself to the piano, and play the familiar tune of 'Abide with me,' singing to herself the verse, 'Hold Thou Thy Cross ....' She seemed to find such joy and comfort in it.

"She never went to the Cathedral again after Sunday, June 12th. On the Tuesday following she was dressed to go to the midday Celebration, as usual, but was not well enough to do so, and after that Canon Vaughan used to come and give her private Celebrations. This was her great comfort.

"When most people would have been staying in bed, or just moving to an arm-chair, my mother kept on getting up after breakfast, and dressing. Towards the end, however, the great heat tried her greatly. For some time she used to beg the doctor to make her strong and well, for 'I want to begin to work again,' she said; but as weakness and breathlessness increased, she begged us to pray that she might die."

So the hot days of July passed by in the quiet house, and early in August the end was drawing near.

"On the morning of Tuesday, August 9th, we had thought the end was coming, when, as we stood round her, suddenly her eyes opened. A lovely smile lit up her face, and she looked radiantly out towards the window, while her eyes simply seemed to *flash*. This lasted about a minute, and then she closed her eyes, and drooped her head, but in another little space the same thing happened again.

"She had four or five of these wonderful visions, and we who watched her longed to know what it was that she was allowed to see. Did her eyes indeed 'behold the

King in His beauty ?' or was some glimpse vouchsafed to her of those whom she had 'loved long since, and lost awhile ?' We could not tell, and her dear voice was silenced; only we knew, by that wonderful light on her countenance, that her visions filled her with the intensest joy. Just once again her lips moved, and we caught the whispered words, 'Abide—abide with me !'

"After that she fell into a deep unconsciousness, from which she only rallied once, for a second, when I told her that Canon Vaughan had come to pray with her. She just laid her hand on his arm to show how glad she was. . . .

"All through the next day we watched and prayed beside her, but she could no longer give any sign of response. When Thursday morning came, she opened her eyes for a second, just once more. That was at about 8 o'clock, and then the end came very soon. I held her dear hand in mine, and felt the pulse growing weaker and weaker, as her breathing grew quiet and faint. And so, very gently, and in perfect peace, she passed to her eternal rest, and we thanked God for giving her the victory."

Chapter IX

AFTER THE HARVEST

"....Others shall
Take patience, labour, to their heart and hand
From thy hand, and thy heart, and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all."
E. B. Browning.

SO the long life of loving service was ended, and the joyous spirit entered into the perfected bliss for which she had waited, in the nearer Presence of the Lord she loved. The thought of her exultant joy filled the hearts even of her nearest and dearest, piercing their sorrow as the sun's radiance shines from behind the clouds.

The old red house had grown suddenly empty and desolate, yet from the hushed stillness that enwrapped it there went up thanksgivings none the less heartfelt for being blent with tears. And those thanksgivings were echoed in ever-widening circles from thousands upon thousands of hearts in the world outside. Seldom, surely, can there have been a death more widely recognised as the triumphant entrance into rest and joy well won.

Into *fellowship*, too; the new and glorious fellowship she had looked and longed for, with dear ones gone on before, as also with the souls she had been privileged to comfort, help and cheer. The vast assembly gathered in the Cathedral, on August 15th,* for a last farewell was as the shadowed counterpart of the rejoicing company

* An account of the funeral is given in Appendix I.

welcoming her into "that new life where partings are no more." As one who was present wrote of it:—

"The funeral was very wonderful. The whole of England seemed to acknowledge and rejoice in what she had done, and in the Power in which she had done it. And also one could not but feel the certainty of the rejoicing for her, and with her, on the other side. Every one present must have felt the tremendous possibilities of their human life when filled and transcended by the life of the Spirit."

A letter written to Mrs. Sumner in her life-time voices this same thought, which was present in so many hearts at that service of thanksgiving and farewell:—

"I have always loved the thought that possibly, when we are called hence, those whom we have helped on earth may be allowed to take us before the Throne, and say gladly, 'We are here because of her.' If such a thing can be, I believe that you will be surrounded by an almost countless crowd of those who in this life have thanked God for having granted you the inspiration, the zeal and the courage for your glorious work in giving us the Mothers' Union."

The words call to mind a passage in one of Mrs. Sumner's own leaflets* wherein she pictures the joy awaiting the mother who in her earthly home has striven to make Christ's Presence a living power. To such a mother she says, in words that might have been spoken to herself:—

"Your children will rise up and call you blessed. The Lord Jesus will live in your heart, in your home. He will bless your husband and your children, and when this short life is over you will reap a great and everlasting reward. The King of kings will take away the cross of all your earthly troubles, and place a crown of victory on your head. He will wipe away all tears from your eyes. He will say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!'

* "An Appeal to Mothers."

"Yet a little while, and your children will follow you through the Golden Gates into the Heavenly City. You will meet all gloriously in your Saviour's presence, to be with Him for evermore. You will bow your head before the Throne and say, 'Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me.'"

Such was the vision of motherhood which the Foundress of the Mothers' Union had kept before her throughout her married life, and it was the hope wherein her many thousand "children in the Lord" could rejoice, for her, after her death. As one Diocesan President wrote:

"For her—with all that it means of reunion with her best-beloved, and to *see Him* Whose service she has so loved—for her, we can only thank God, from the very depths of our hearts. And for ourselves, I believe, one and all, we should say, we may have made many failures in our duties to both husband and children, but we should never have attained to the measure of joy and victory that God has vouchsafed to us, but for our beloved Mrs. Sumner, her teaching, her example and wonderful inspiration."

The same note of thankfulness sounds in Archdeacon Fearon's letter:—

"She has left a mark on the life of our English homes, and indeed on the life of the Church, which will never be forgotten. It is just fifty-three years since first I met her at Farnham Castle, and ever since she has been a wonderfully kind, good friend to me, as she has been to all who knew her, and to thousands who did not. And she has left us all an example and a help, for which we may with full heart thank God."

From the depths of full hearts the members of the Mothers' Union have indeed joined in true thanksgiving. As an Enrolling Member wrote on behalf of her whole Branch, in words that express what many other letters also said:—

"The name of our Foundress will ever be remembered with reverence and great thankfulness. The beauty of her

life should inspire us to fulfil in ourselves, and in our Branches, all that she worked and pleaded for in the long years of her ministry at home and in far lands."

It is a temptation to go on quoting from the many letters of love and recognition which Mrs. Sumner's death drew from all classes of society, and from all parts of the world. The Queen herself sent a personal telegram to Mrs. Sumner's family, "to express to you Her Majesty's great regret at hearing of your sad loss, and Her Majesty's deep sympathy in your sorrow, which will be shared by many." From Princess Beatrice also came an expression of sympathy, and Her Royal Highness was represented at the funeral. Diocesan Presidents, Presiding and Enrolling Members, in all parts, sent personal letters and corporate expressions of love and remembrance. Services of thanksgiving and commemoration were held in all parts of England; indeed, one might truly say, in all parts of the world, so widespread was the desire to join in doing honour to a life unreservedly offered and gloriously used in God's service.

It would be easy to linger over the tributes to that beloved memory, but it would mean necessarily much repetition of the self-same thoughts, which may be well summed up in the concluding sentences of the message sent by the Scottish Mothers' Union:—

"We know how much we owed, in the early beginnings of our Scottish Union, to Mrs. Sumner's wise and sympathetic counsels, and those who had the privilege of knowing her during her tour in this country can never forget the charm of her gracious personality, and the inspiration of her God-given enthusiasm.

"God give her peace, and grant her hereafter to see the fruit of her labours."

After the Harvest.

So the joy of harvest goes up to heaven, and thanksgivings for a richly fruitful life are offered in abundance, and after that—what next? That is the question left with those to whom Mary Sumner's life and work are more than a matter for passing interest, admiration, or even gratitude. In the words which Canon Vaughan spoke of her from the pulpit in Winchester Cathedral:—

"Her real memorial will be found, not so much in the marble monument covering her remains; not so much in the twin buttresses on the south side of the Cathedral, which commemorate her work—not so much in the Mary Sumner House at Westminster, established in her honour—as it will be found in the Society that she founded, and in the grateful hearts of thousands and tens of thousands of human beings, 'in lives made brighter by her presence.'"

". . . . Mrs. Sumner was a Christian in the true meaning of the word, *i.e.*, one devoted to Christ. She lived in her Master's presence. She was for ever holding communication with Him. . . .

"The prayer of Frances Ridley Havergal was the prayer of Mary Elizabeth Sumner:—

"Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments, and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my hands, and let them be
Swift and 'beautiful' for Thee.

"Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King.
Take my love; my Lord I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee."

". . . . She, being dead, yet speaketh. And if she could speak to us, in human language, she would, I think, call upon us, men and women alike, to dedicate our lives to Him Who is perfect Purity, and perfect Love."

After the harvest comes the new life that springs from it. The golden grain is in-gathered, not merely to be stored in safety, but to be made into new life-force to give strength to those that shall sow and reap in days to come. The fruits of Mrs. Sumner's labours are ours to use as the seed of fresh ventures of faith in her own great enterprise of winning for God the nation's homes. In new ways, often, as new challenges confront us, and new problems have to be dealt with, and fresh dangers faced; yet with the one steadfast purpose that she set before us, and in the one strength that never changes, and can never fail. For it is the strength of a living faith in the love of God, brought home to our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the personal Presence of Jesus Christ our Lord.

APPENDIX I

MRS. SUMNER'S FUNERAL, AUGUST 15TH, 1921.

(*From an account given in the "Hampshire Chronicle."*)

THE funeral of Mrs. Sumner on Monday brought about a spectacle such as, it might be claimed, has not been equalled in Winchester on a similar occasion within living memory, a congregation of fully 4000 assembling at the Cathedral to testify their affectionate respect for one whose life was devoted to so worthy a cause as that of uplifting and bringing happiness to the home, both on its material and spiritual side. Not only was the vast nave promptly filled, in the aisles as well as its central portion, by people, very few of whom were not wearing some outward symbol of mourning, but it became necessary to occupy the few remaining seats in the choir, which for a while had been reserved.

The following message had been telegraphed to Mrs. Gore Browne* at the Close:—"A command by the Queen to express to you Her Majesty's great regret at hearing of your sad loss and Her Majesty's deep sympathy in your sorrow, which will be shared by so many.—LADY-IN-WAITING."

Those forming the congregation came from all parts, and were very widely representative. In addition to a large number of relatives and personal friends, and clergy from all parts of the Diocese, there were, of course, literally thousands of members of the Mothers' Union, representing Branches and Dioceses far and near. Mrs. Hubert Barclay (Central President) represented the whole Society; Mrs. Ernest Wilberforce (Vice-President, formerly Central President of the M.U.) represented H.R.H. Princess Beatrice, Patron of the Mothers' Union in the Isle of Wight. The Central Council of the Society, and the Staff of the Mary Sumner House, were also represented.

Mrs. Sumner's house in the Close was the one on the south-east side (through the archway) of the Cathedral, and it was on the

* Lady Heywood, Mrs. Sumner's elder daughter, was unable to take any part in her mother's funeral, owing to her own grave illness. She died on August 18th.

gravelled space in front that the funeral procession was formed. The body was borne on a wheeled bier. The coffin, of unpolished English oak, with raised full-length Latin cross, had a plate inscribed:

Rest in the Lord.
MARY ELIZABETH SUMNER,
Died August 11th, 1921,
Aged 92 years.

A lovely floral cross from her children rested on the coffin—the other wreaths, crosses, and flowers had been taken into the Cathedral, where they were placed in front of and near the choir stalls.

There is little to record of the actual service beyond saying that it was dignified in its simplicity, and outstanding was the hushed and reverent demeanour of the vast concourse of people. The opening sentences were said by Canon Vaughan and then the robed clergy led the procession to the choir, an impressive feature being the great number of family and personal mourners walking behind the body, which, from the south door to the choir, was borne on the shoulders of men. The ninetieth Psalm was chanted, and the hymns were " Let saints on earth " and " How bright those glorious spirits shine ! " the congregation taking full opportunity of joining in the singing. The Dean read the appointed lesson and the prayers were taken by Canon Braithwaite. The interment was in what is known as the Water Close—the piece of ground adjoining the Cathedral on its south-east side and overlooked by the windows of what was Bishop and Mrs. Sumner's residence. The procession to the grave-side was in the same order and by the same way, the organist playing Chopin's " Funeral March " as the body was borne out. The enclosed ground is comparatively small and it was only possible to accommodate those actually in the procession, but the pathway leading through to Colebrook Street was lined with people. The concluding portion of the service—generally spoken of as the committal—was wholly taken by the Bishop of Winchester, who himself held the pastoral staff as he said the final Benediction.

As would be expected, the wreaths and crosses from Mothers' Union members in Dioceses and Branches were very numerous, and the effect produced was extremely beautiful.

After the funeral a muffled peal (whole pull and stand) was rung on the Cathedral bells, the tenor bell giving the years of Mrs. Sumner's life.

APPENDIX II

MRS. SUMNER'S WRITINGS

MRS. SUMNER'S largest works are the two books, "Our Holiday in the East," and "Memoir of Bishop Sumner." Her lesser writings were very numerous, and include many magazine articles and leaflets relating to the work of the Mothers' Union, among which the following are some of the most important. (They are not all in print.)

What is the Mothers' Union?
Speakers for the Mothers' Union.
An Appeal to Educated Mothers.
Home Training.
Nursery Training.
Union is Strength.
To a Mother after the Baptism of her Child.
Home Life.
Appeal to Husbands and Fathers.
Holy Marriage.
Divorce: A National Danger.
A Welcome to a Bride and Bridegroom.
A Mother's Greatest Duty.
The Keystone.
Responsibility of Parents.
A Few Words to Mothers of Little Children.
God's Call to Mothers.
Influence of Modern Society on Sunday in the Home.
Congratulations to a Mother on the Birth of her Child.
A Grave Peril.

PART II

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MOTHERS' UNION

INTRODUCTION

I AM anxious to express our great gratitude to Lady Horatia Erskine both for having found time to put together the valuable record from which this short History of the Mothers' Union has been compiled and also for so generously allowing us to make this use of her work.

Lady Horatia was good enough to hand over her manuscript to me, as Central President, some eighteen months ago, and it was only owing to the immense difficulties created by the War that it was not immediately published.

The delay, however, has not been without its advantages, for it is singularly appropriate that selections from this important record of the growth and development of the Mothers' Union should appear with the Memoir of its Foundress and first Central President.

From the very outset Lady Horatia Erskine was Mrs. Sumner's loyal friend and trusted adviser and together they laid the sure foundations of our great Society as it now stands.

EMILY WILBERFORCE.

November, 1921.

FOREWORD

IT is hoped that the following short "History of the Mothers' Union"—though much compressed from the original record written by me—may afford some general information and stir up the interest of present-day workers and members, many of whom have known nothing of its start beyond the fact that Mrs. Sumner was its Foundress.

The framing of the Constitution and the subsequent Incorporation of the Mothers' Union are land-marks in its history which should be familiar to all its workers, because the world-wide development of the Society in later years is directly due to the careful and effective organisation which was carried through in earlier days with so much patient effort. The prayers which were offered up for years were, we now know, both heard and answered.

Mrs. Sumner has left us in the Mothers' Union both a legacy and a trust. The former is her vision of all Motherhood pledged to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ; the latter, the obligation that rests upon each successive generation of Christian Mothers to bring the vision nearer to earth, and so to hasten the coming of Christ's Kingdom.

HORATIA E. ERSKINE,
Life Vice-President.

November, 1921.

Horatia Erskine
1911.

Chapter I

1892—1910.

Central President:
Mrs. Sumner.

THIS short account of the growth and development of the Mothers' Union as an organised Society within the Church of England will begin with the events which led to its Centralisation at Westminster in 1896.

As has already been narrated in the first part of this book, the Mothers' Union was given organisation in Winchester Diocese shortly after Mrs. Sumner's address to women at the Church Congress held at Portsmouth in 1885. Very rapidly other dioceses followed the lead given by Winchester and they generally accepted the Winchester organisation, though in time various differences of administration led to inevitable difficulties and confusion. Mrs. Sumner was appealed to for advice from all quarters, until it became quite impossible for her to deal single-handed with all the problems and correspondence that arose.

1892.

In 1892 it was found that the Mothers' Union was working in twenty-eight dioceses and that it had 1550 branches and over 60,000 members, but so little cohesion existed between the diocesan organisations that a recognised Central organisation with a President, Council and Secretary became a matter of urgent necessity.

It was no easy matter to bring co-ordination into a society which had rapidly developed on lines of great elasticity, and it took some four years of unceasing effort on the part of certain leaders in the Mothers' Union to form the Central Council, and to frame for the whole Union a sound constitution which should define its Objects and regulate its methods of organisation.

The first step was taken by the newly constituted London Diocesan Council from which body, in 1892, an invitation was sent to Mrs. Sumner to summon a Conference in the Church House, Westminster, to consider the formation of a Centre. The one point then gained was the decision that an Annual Conference should be held in London, to form a meeting-point for all representatives of dioceses, to give opportunity for hearing their opinions and to be the means of securing some better methods of cohesion in the work. In this year, 1892, many of the Bishops consented to become Patrons of the Mothers' Union.

1893—1896.

In March 1893 a further step was taken, and all the existing Diocesan Presidents of the Mothers' Union met in London and resolved themselves into a COMMITTEE OF PRESIDENTS, the embryo of the future Central Council. The main duty of this Committee was to make arrangements for the Annual Conference. In 1894 the Committee of Presidents decided to have a scheme prepared for Centralisation, and at last, in 1896, the much desired object was attained and a Central Council of the Mothers' Union was formed. Its first duty was to pass a Constitution which had been most carefully prepared and to elect its Central President. It need hardly be said that Mrs. Sumner, Foundress of the Mothers' Union, was unanimously chosen. Mrs. Matthew was appointed

Central Secretary and a locker was hired for her work at the Church House, Westminster.

From this humble beginning sprang the present Central Offices at 8, Dean's Yard, Westminster, with their Chapel, Library and Lecture Room. The first Council Meeting also gave its recognition to the title "The Mothers' Union," agreed to the wording of the Three Objects, and appointed and defined the duties of its Executive Committee.

1897.

Difficulties soon had to be faced and dealt with by the new Governing Body. At its second meeting strong protests were made by the Scottish Presidents, and by the Mothers' Union in New Zealand, against the Clause in the Constitution which laid down that "All official workers must be members of the Church of England or Ireland." After long discussion it was decided to add in brackets to the Clause, "This rule does not apply to Scotland or the Colonies." This addition became known as "The Bracket," and there will be reason to refer to it again later on.

It was at this second Council Meeting that the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25th, was appointed as the Annual Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Mothers' Union, and all branches were asked to observe it as far as possible.

In the same year Her Majesty Queen Victoria graciously granted her Patronage to the Mothers' Union, and was pleased to accept a congratulatory address from the Central Council on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee. Two years later their Royal Highnesses the Princess of Wales (Queen Alexandra) and the Duchess of York (Queen Mary) also became Royal Patrons.

1898.

In 1898 Miss Charlotte Yonge and Mrs. (afterwards Lady) Jenkyns were made members of the Central Council in recognition of their work as the respective Editors of *Mothers in Council* and the *Mothers' Union Journal.* The *Journal,* an excellent quarterly paper for Mothers' Union members, had been started by Mrs. Jenkyns in 1888, and in 1891 Miss Yonge became the first Editor of *Mothers in Council,* also a quarterly magazine, specially intended for mothers of leisure and education.

1899—1901.

In 1899 the first Mothers' Union Almanac was published. It met with instant success and 20,000 copies were quickly sold. It was in this year that a small room on the ground floor at the Church House was taken by the Mothers' Union as a Central Office—a great advance upon the locker in the basement of the building!

The year 1900 is marked by the first of the Annual Services at St. Paul's Cathedral which have been held there in almost unbroken succession ever since. The years of exception are: 1913, when the Conference Week proceedings were held in York; 1920, when a Consecration of Bishops in St. Paul's necessitated a change of arrangements and the migration of the Mothers' Union to St. Margaret's, Westminster; and 1921, when an invitation from the Diocese of Chester was accepted.

In 1901, the year of national mourning, the Central Council of the Mothers' Union sent, on behalf of all the members, an expression of their sorrow and sympathy to the Royal Family on the death of Queen Victoria, and a beautiful wreath to her funeral. In memory of the Great Queen members of the Mothers' Union also subscribed largely to the National Memorial and contributed £1270 to the Queen Victoria Nurses' Fund.

During this year the Mothers' Union sustained a great loss in the death of Miss Charlotte Yonge, who, as well as being the Editor of its magazine, *Mothers in Council*, had been one of its earliest Associates and best friends. Bishop Sumner, by special request, then accepted responsibility for *Mothers in Council* and continued to be its Editor until 1908.

1902.

The year 1902 saw the starting of a Lending Library in the Central Office—a somewhat modest beginning from which has developed the large and valuable library of many thousand volumes which members and friends of the Mothers' Union can use and enjoy at the present time.

A small but significant change was made this year in the wording of the Mothers' Union "Second Object," "Empire" being substituted for "England." This leads to a short digression with reference to the rapid spread of the Mothers' Union Overseas after its Centralisation in 1896. Canada (London, Ontario) claims the first Overseas branch of the Mothers' Union in 1888, Christchurch, New Zealand, running it very close. But not until the Society had Central organisation did the work abroad spread widely on diocesan lines. At the time when this history is being compiled, the Mothers' Union Overseas forms a part of the organisation of eighty dioceses, has some 800 branches and 10,000 members.

The Mothers' Union is now even wider than the British Empire itself; many missionary dioceses have branches in countries outside our King's dominions, such as China, Japan, Persia, Madagascar, etc.

1903.

In 1903 the Central Council of the Mothers' Union pledged itself to resist all attacks made upon the Marriage

Laws of this country and entered upon a line of action which has had no small effect upon our national life. During the previous year, 1902, a " Protest " had been made by the Mothers' Union, in connection with other Women's Societies, against the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill. In December, 1903, the Dowager Countess of Chichester was elected as a member of the Central Council, an event which also influenced very strongly the direction of Mothers' Union activities for several years to come.

A Finance Committee was at this time appointed by the Council, and the Hon. Mrs. Evelyn Hubbard became the first Central Treasurer. The need of a reliable source of income became felt as the obligations of the Mothers' Union increased, but although three schemes for supplying a settled income were discussed, none were entirely approved and each in turn was abandoned. The finances of the Union remained dependent upon the profits on the sales of its literature and the voluntary contributions of those who were then known as " Subscribing Members."

1904—1907.

The year 1904 was one of great expansion in Church work in South Africa, and, in connection with the Mission of Help from England, the Mothers' Union sent out Mrs. Arthur Phillp as a Deputation Speaker.

Mrs. Evelyn Hubbard, to the regret of every member of the Council, felt obliged to resign her post as Treasurer in 1905 and was succeeded by Mr. John Hill.

During this year, with the help of Mrs. Russell, the Mothers' Union began to work definitely among Maternity and District Nurses and rules for their enrolment in the Mothers' Union were drawn up.

The literature of the Mothers' Union began at this time to receive greater consideration from the Central Council, as the demand for Mothers' Union publications

had caused them to become a valuable aid to the work of the Society as well as a considerable financial asset.

It followed, therefore, that in 1906 a Literature Committee was appointed by the Central Council with Lady Horatia Erskine as the Chairman. It immediately began to deal with many important matters and acted in 1907 in co-operation with the Bishop of London's Council for the Home Training of Children in Religion, which eventually resulted in the Mothers' Union establishing a Religious Education Scheme and Book Supply of its own. The Literature Committee on its appointment took charge of the Library and of all the Mothers' Union publications. It has now (1921) three Sub-Committees to deal with different branches of its work—(1) the Publications, (2) the Library and Book Supply, and (3) Education Committees, each Sub-Committee having its own appointed Chairman.

In 1907 Mrs. Halliday was sent by the Central Council on a tour to Australia and New Zealand, which lasted several months and was the means of establishing the Mothers' Union in many new dioceses. Mrs. Halliday also visited Ceylon.

1908.

In 1908, at the invitation of the Congress of the American Church, Mrs. Allen Whitworth visited the United States and attended the Congress as a Mothers' Union Deputation Speaker.

Information came this year from Australia that certain dioceses had altered the wording on Members' Cards to suit the views of Baptists. Mrs. Sumner, as Central President, wrote firmly to protest, and to insist that the Mothers' Union Card must be accepted as it stood, or not at all. Mrs. Sumner's insistence upon infant baptism as the Sacrament of entry into Christ's Church, and upon

Holy Communion as the greatest privilege of the Christian life, was the most marked feature of her teaching. From the first certain Nonconformist applicants could be accepted as members in the Mothers' Union, should they desire to join, but the Sacrament of Baptism was always made the first condition of membership—the Holy Communion as the highest " means of grace," was commended to every confirmed member, and the acceptance of the Godhead of Our Lord Jesus Christ was required equally with Baptism as a condition of membership.

Mrs. Matthew, after twelve years of hard and continuous work as Central Secretary, resigned her post in the autumn of 1908 and Mrs. William Maude, London Diocesan Secretary was appointed in her place. In reviewing Mrs. Maude's work for the Central Mothers' Union during the past thirteen years it is not possible to express the deep appreciation which fills the grateful hearts of all her fellow-workers in the Union, to whose service she has devoted her life and her powers ever since she became its London Secretary some twenty years ago.

1908 was the year of the great Pan Anglican Congress, and in June the Central Council of the Mothers' Union gave a reception at the Church House, Westminster, to the Overseas Delegates and their wives. Later in the year (October 28th) the first great Mass Meeting of the Mothers' Union was held in the Albert Hall, Kensington, with Archbishop Maclagan (of York) and the Bishop of Stepney (now Archbishop of York) present and Mrs. Sumner in the Chair. Although Mrs. Sumner was in her eightieth year and had celebrated her Diamond Wedding three months previously, she addressed the huge meeting with all her accustomed eloquence, and was received with the greatest enthusiasm. Mrs. Oluwole, wife of the African Bishop of Lagos, spoke of the deep

appreciation felt by her country-women in Western Equatorial Africa for the Mothers' Union and of the help it brought to Christian mothers of every race and colour, uniting them in an unbreakable bond of fellowship and prayer.

Shortly after the great Mass Meeting Bishop Sumner's failing health necessitated his resignation as Editor of *Mothers in Council*, and Canon Nash, of Winchester, was appointed in his place. Canon Nash proved a valuable and faithful friend to the Mothers' Union in this capacity and also in another way, as the next chapter will show.

1909.

In consequence of her advancing years, and the failing health of her beloved husband, Mrs. Sumner felt early in 1909 that the time for her resignation as Central President would soon be at hand, and she asked that members of the Council would elect one of their number to succeed her. Several ladies were approached but no one was willing even to be nominated as a candidate for election. The actual resignation of the revered Foundress of the Mothers' Union as the leader of its Governing Body was announced on December 9th at the half-yearly Council Meeting. Deep sympathy was expressed by all present on receiving the sad news that Bishop Sumner was dying. His death took place two days afterwards.

It was imperative that a new President should be found, and the Dowager Countess of Chichester was prevailed upon to accept the post. She became President without a formal election, taking office on January 1st, 1910.

The last year of Mrs. Sumner's Presidentship had been largely occupied with two matters, one of external, the other of internal importance to the Mothers' Union.

The consideration of methods whereby the increasing tide of divorce might be stemmed led to an important

event which was shortly to follow, and a necessary revision of the Constitution of the Mothers' Union seemed likely to cause some sharp division of opinion among the members of Council.

The new President took the helm at a time when the ship of the Mothers' Union was entering somewhat stormy waters. Its passage through those waters and into various new ports of call will be the subject of the next chapter in its history.

A Chichester

Chapter II

1910—1911.

Central President:

The Dowager Countess of Chichester.

THOSE who knew Lady Chichester realised how well the activities of her previous life had qualified her to preside over the affairs of what had now become a national and world-wide Society. The daughter of the first Lord Wolverton, and sister to the Hon. and Rev. Edward Carr Glyn (afterwards Bishop of Peterborough), the Hon. Alice Glyn had married in 1870 the Hon. and Rev. Francis Pelham, and worked devotedly with him among the poor in Lambeth, Yarmouth and other places; always taking a leading part in the work of many Church Societies. When her husband became Earl of Chichester, other fields of influence opened out before her—for, alas, only too short a time. Lord and Lady Chichester had hardly settled down in their lovely Sussex home when the future President of the Mothers' Union was called upon to bear the sorrows of bereavement and widowhood. Her eldest son, the new Earl, came into occupation of Stanmer, and the Dowager Countess threw her energies afresh into religious and social work. She had much hesitation about accepting the leadership of the Mothers' Union, but her love for the Society overcame her own personal wishes in the matter, and she shouldered the burden of responsibility with a good courage.

Lady Chichester's first letter to all the Diocesan Presidents shows how seriously she intended to devote herself to her new sphere of work, and never once, during her six years of office, did she spare herself in any way.

"Dear Fellow-Workers,

I wish to lose no time in expressing to you my deep appreciation of the honour you have done me in calling me to the post of President of the Central Council of the Mothers' Union. It has been absolutely unsought and unlooked for by me and the sense of your confidence at such a time is the greatest help to me.

No one can possibly fill the place of our venerated Foundress and President; her position with regard to the Mothers' Union is unique and will always remain so. Many members of the Central Council are more intimate and have a longer and closer friendship with her than I can boast, but I yield to none in my affection for her delightful personality or in my admiration for the directness of aim, the steadfastness of purpose and the skill of her guidance, by which this great Society has grown up under her hands. Never again can any President be what our Foundress and first President has been, or live to see, as she has seen, the striking response to her idea of a Mothers' Union. Never again can one individual bear alone the weight and responsibility of the work which has gathered such strength and expansion under her direction.

Your President may, through the co-operation of the Central Council and Executive Committee and with the aid of skilled help in the Office, endeavour to conduct the business, guide the deliberations and regulate and assimilate the work, but neither on myself nor on any other President can Mrs. Sumner's mantle fall. All that has grown up with the years under her care would weigh down—as a sudden burden—anyone unpractised to the strain. Her mantle falls on the Central Council and its Executive Committee and on the President as their responsible officer. As such it will be my earnest endeavour to serve to the best of my power, for a time, the great cause of the Mothers' Union,

I feel deeply the gravity of the crisis which this first break in the long government of the Mothers' Union may cause. I look to the support of the Central Council—to its wise judgment, calm courage and wide sympathies, to carry forward the work of the Mothers' Union (with its simple organisation and its sympathetic methods) in the spirit in which it was originally conceived.

The Revision of the Constitution at this particular moment is an additional anxiety. The necessity for it is, however, acknowledged. The extraordinary development and extension of the Mothers' Union demands that with the lengthening of its cords must come the strengthening of its stakes.

I know I may count at this juncture upon the prayers of those who know me. Of those to whom I am now a stranger I ask their indulgence and also their prayers, that the work we all love may not be hindered at this time but may go on from strength to strength.

I am, your obedient servant,

A. CHICHESTER."

1910.

One of Lady Chichester's first duties was of a national character, namely, to forward to Queen Alexandra, on behalf of the whole Mothers' Union, an address of sympathy on the lamented death of King Edward and to arrange for a crown of flowers to be sent to Windsor on the day of the Royal funeral.

Subjects of far-reaching importance faced the new President as she took up her work. As has been already recorded, the last year of Mrs. Sumner's administration had been largely occupied with the subject of Divorce and the attitude to be taken towards the Royal Commission on Divorce then commencing its operations. At the Council of December, 1909, The Lady Horatia Erskine reported that Mrs. Sumner had written to the Archbishop of York on the subject of a monster petition against the

reply to the Chairman she stated that the Mothers' Union would be in favour of the repeal of the Act of 1857 and urged that relief should only be obtainable by way of 'Separation,' which keeps the door open for reconciliation and which should be made equally accessible to all classes, irrespective of their means. The demand for increased facilities was a pandering to the present-day idea that suffering and hardship were to be deprecated and avoided at any cost.

"Mrs. Hubbard maintained that the national character was raised by patient endurance of hardships and not by lessening responsibilities, and emphasised the words of the Marriage Vow 'for better, for worse,' etc., as contemplating the necessary bearing of hardship. She held that observance of the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage was the only real method of preventing the demoralisation of Society, and contended that as churchwomen they regarded marriage after divorce as immoral.

"This point was driven home by one or two striking instances of the way in which, among the upper classes, marriage is being entered into as an experiment with the alternative of divorce in view from the outset. It was obvious that the more difficult it was to get out of a contract the more careful people would be as to entering into it. Pressed as to the difficulty of the unequal operation of the present law as between rich and poor, Mrs. Hubbard replied that, while fully recognising as a general principle that every individual has an equal right to the protection of the law, the Mothers' Union believing Divorce to be wrong in itself could not but protest against any extension of it. She also stated her conviction that among the respectable poor there was no desire for facilities for Divorce.

"Mrs. Francis Steinthal, Diocesan Secretary for the Mothers' Union in the Diocese of Ripon, corroborated this statement, and from intimate knowledge of the working classes in large towns was in a position to say that, for the most part, they resent the idea that they wish for any extension of Divorce facilities. She presented resolutions to this effect from over 85,000 working mothers. She had it on the authority of many who were striving to bring up their families to respect

marriage, that to cheapen Divorce would lead their sons and daughters to enter upon marriage more lightly. They also felt that it was an injustice to those who were struggling to lead a good life that vice should be legalised. Mrs. Steinthal said that to the sober, intelligent working men and women, their marriage vows have a deep significance. It was also their widespread desire that details of divorce cases should be kept out of papers.

"Mrs. Church, speaking with a long experience of life amongst the very poor in East London also affirmed that there was no large desire for Divorce but that, on the contrary, the poor despised the richer folk for the readiness with which they sought it. The respectable working classes have a strong conviction that husband and wife are one till death. Mrs. Church also endorsed the statement made by the former witness as to the degrading influence of the details published of Divorce cases.

"The Mothers' Union must be congratulated on the firm stand made by their representatives against any extension of Divorce facilities, and we may feel sure that the constant enunciation of their views on the sanctity of marriage, as based on the teaching of the Church, will not be without its effect."

Here we must leave the Divorce question for the moment and turn to other matters that claimed the attention of the Central Council early in 1910.

In March Mr. Hill resigned his post as Treasurer and the Rev. R. T. Gardner was appointed in his place. A second room was taken by the Mothers' Union in the Church House to serve as Mrs. Maude's private office and as a Committee Room. The Staff by now had increased by two Assistant Secretaries and they carried on their work in the original office taken in 1889.

The Revision of the Constitution had already been occupying the time of the Council for more than a year. Mrs. Sumner had herself been the first to propose certain alterations, but although her suggestions had been sent

to each Diocesan Council for approval they were not sufficiently supported to enable them to be carried into effect. Gradually the need for revision became manifest to all, and the difficulty then lay in the number and variety of alterations proposed. No two dioceses were of quite the same mind in the matter, and the wording of the Members' Card proved a thorny problem, which produced great variety of opinion.

Previous to the work of Revision it had become evident that a further step would be advisable to consolidate the position of the Mothers' Union and to protect its title, publications and funds. Hitherto there had been no Central Body in the Mothers' Union which could *legally* hold or invest property, or take proceedings if its title or its publications were pirated. Societies with very different objects were springing up in various parts of the country, using the same title, "The Mothers' Union," and publishers, finding that to head a booklet "Mothers' Union" gave it a ready sale were not always scrupulous about gaining permission for the privilege.

Many difficulties and some confusion having arisen, it was considered advisable to obtain legal opinion upon the position of the Mothers' Union and its possessions, investments, powers and publications. The legal advisors of the Mothers' Union were consulted and they strongly urged that the Mothers' Union should become an Incorporated Society with a Charter of its own, thereby placing its name, funds and publications under the protection of the Board of Trade. The Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Randall Davidson) also advised that this important step should be taken.

1911.

It was necessary to postpone the December Council of 1910 to February 1911, in order that a statement of

facts might be prepared to lay before that assembly, and although all members of the Council were not equally ready for the new move, the principle of Incorporation was then carried. The legal adviser addressed the Council and made a clear statement of how matters stood. The Council was then, he explained, merely a " Consultative Committee," but by means of " Incorporation " it would become a " Legal and Corporate Body."

The Revision of the Constitution now became even more urgently necessary, and in June 1911 a special Committee was appointed to carry through the undertaking. This Committee met for several consecutive days in October 1911, and again in February 1912, to draw up a Report to be presented to the Council in the following June. It was at this juncture that Canon Nash, Editor of *Mothers in Council*, proved his friendship for the Mothers' Union by consenting to act as Chairman of this Committee; a task of no little difficulty, which he admirably performed.

Before leaving the year 1911 there are a few other points of interest to record. From the outset of her leadership in the Mothers' Union, Lady Chichester carried her conviction that the Mothers' Union must concern itself with all that affected national purity of life into the work of its Councils. The homes of the country must ever be the sources whence purity in national life must flow, and every endeavour made by the Church or State to stem pollution must be aided by the largest and most influential Society of women within the Church. Therefore, late in 1910, a Bill to raise the age of Protection for Boys and Girls (Mr. King's " Morality Bill ") engaged the consideration of the Mothers' Union Central Council, and the progress of every Criminal Law Amendment Bill before the country has been watched and supported by the Central Council ever since.

In March 1911 a meeting was called by the Mothers' Union to warn workers of the insidious danger of the Mormon Campaign in England—a danger that is by no means a thing of the past in 1921.

The Triennial Elections throughout the Mothers' Union took place in 1911; Sir David and Lady Horatia Erskine celebrated their Golden Wedding, and received an address and gifts from the Central Council and from the London Diocesan Council; representatives were appointed by the Mothers' Union to serve on the Central Councils of "Women's Church Work" and of the "Parents' National Educational Union." Beautiful Coronation Cards in honour of King George and Queen Mary were issued by the Literature Committee—on which figured prominently King George's fine words that "The strength of a nation lies in the homes of its people."

The Winchester Buttress Fund, in memory of Bishop Sumner, was started during this year, and a campaign to oppose the Disestablishment of the Welsh Church was inaugurated by a strong Ladies' Committee, presided over by the Hon. Mrs. Gell and Mrs. Wilberforce.

Chapter III

1912—1916.

Central President:

The Dowager Countess of Chichester.

1912.

THE year of 1912 opened in great activity. The danger of Socialistic Sunday Schools engaged the serious attention of the Council, and letters of warning were sent to all the leading clergy. Pernicious literature was then, as always, a problem with which the Mothers' Union was bound to deal. The White Slave Traffic caused a wave of horror and alarm to flow throughout the country, and the Mothers' Union took its part in a Mass Meeting at the London Opera House to expose the evil and to rouse the Government to action with regard to it.

In December of this year, at the earnest instigation of Lady Laura Ridding, a "Watch Committee" was appointed by the Central Council "to watch and give information and to advise the Council as to desirable action with regard to legislative proposals in Parliament concerning matters affecting the welfare of the mothers of the nation."

The importance of the work of this Committee will become apparent as this history proceeds. In December, 1912, Mr. Cecil Bovill succeeded Rev. R. J. Gardner as Central Treasurer; an Overseas Committee was appointed, also a Central Committee for furthering work among Nurses.

We now turn back to the two great matters of importance—the result of the Royal Commission on Divorce

and the Revision of the Constitution of the Mothers' Union.

It was not until November 1912 that Lady Chichester and Mrs. Evelyn Hubbard were invited by Sir Lewis Dibdin to a discussion upon the Minority Report of the Divorce Commission then in the printer's hands. Sir Lewis was most appreciative of all the trouble and energy that had been spent on memorialising Mothers' Union members, and begged this should never be regarded as of no avail. He felt that the testimony borne by the Mothers' Union had had a very perceptible influence upon the minds of the Commissioners, and that a work of real importance had been accomplished, not only for the Mothers' Union but for the whole Church.

The Report of the Committee for the Revision of the Constitution of the Mothers' Union was presented, as arranged, at the June Council, 1912. The Council first considered Part I, which dealt with Incorporation and the adoption of the New Charter. This gave rise to considerable discussion, but, in the end, the adoption was carried by 47 votes against 4, and the Mothers' Union became an Incorporated Society. Part II was then discussed, but as the wording of the proposed new Central Card for Membership (for all members alike, the system of two cards having been abolished) proved difficult, a special Committee was appointed to go more fully into the matter.

On October 17th, 1912, the first General Meeting of the newly incorporated Society took place for the purpose of electing its "Incorporated Members." The Election for the new Central Council followed, and every member of the former Council was re-elected, all of them being, of course, among the first 130 Incorporated Members. The following day the Council met again and formally adopted Parts II and III in the Revision Committee's

Report, and accepted the suggestions as to the formation of a Special Card Committee. Parts I, II and III of the Revised and Incorporated Constitution were subsequently published in the form of a little "grey" book, which should be in every Mothers' Union worker's hands.

The Card of Membership and the Associate's Card were eventually accepted in their new form with only five dissentients, and a unanimous vote of thanks was passed to Mrs. Sumner for the noble way in which she had met and considered the alteration of her original Cards, and for the unselfishness with which she had throughout the Revision yielded to the wishes of others.

Those who had been anxious to see the Revision carried into effect felt now, in October 1912, like the crew of a vessel that had weathered many storms but had at last arrived at a haven where they would be. A great deal of the early opposition had melted away, and the serious discussions on all sides upon the questions raised had changed some early dissentients into strong supporters of the scheme. Looking back to those days, leaders of the Mothers' Union remain full of wonder at and gratitude for the accomplishment of so great a task. The loyal way in which those who disapproved of the changes have carried them out is worthy of all praise. Each year brings fresh proof of the advantages of the revised organisation, especially in the work of the Mothers' Union Overseas.

It is perhaps important to place on record here some of the points that emerged when the Mothers' Union became an Incorporated Society. First it had "legally" to define itself as a Church Society; nothing less definite than this was ever the intention of its Foundress. The legal advisors informed the Council that every "official" in a Church Society must be a confirmed member of the Church of England or of a Church in communion therewith, and that this rule applied to all members of Committees, whether of a diocese, deanery or branch.

This ruling necessitated correspondence with the Scottish Mothers' Union and with the Bishops overseas, in consequence of the "Bracket" clause, already referred to.* The Bishops overseas not only agreed to the rescinding of the "Bracket" clause but the great majority whole-heartedly welcomed the alteration and some Bishops, who had not accepted the Mothers' Union in their dioceses because of the clause were ready now to do so.

The leaders in the Scottish Mothers' Union, however, felt obliged to take a different line of action, when they were made acquainted with the necessity for every member of the Central Council becoming an Incorporated Member of the Mothers' Union. They were not prepared to pledge themselves *only* to send to Council as their representatives, confirmed members of the Episcopal Church in Scotland, and preferred to continue the work of the Scottish Mothers' Union as a separate organisation, closely affiliated to the parent Society but not controlled by its Central governing body.

At the December Council of 1912 it was decided that every home diocese must contribute to the Central Fund at the rate of 2*s*. per branch, the minimum tribute from any diocese being £5. Overseas dioceses were only required to contribute £1 each.

In 1909 the Council had agreed to support a Missionary worker in the Diocese of Tinnevelly, Southern India, and Miss Rix, of the S.P.G., was appointed. In 1912 an appeal was made that the Mothers' Union should also support a worker—this time from the C.M.S. in the adjoining Diocese of Travancore. Miss Lilian Davis was chosen to carry on this work. Miss Rix has now retired from active work, full of years and honour, and Miss Herring is "carrying on" in her place. Miss Davis is still the Mothers' Union Missionary worker in Travancore, respected and beloved by many hundreds of friends and supporters both at home and in Southern India.

1913.

In June 1913 the Central Council met for the first

* See page 109.

time outside London, a suggestion having been received from the Archbishop of York (Dr. Lang) that his ancient city would like to receive the Annual Conference of the Mothers' Union. By the kindness of His Grace, and of Mrs. Pennyman, Diocesan President of the Mothers' Union in York, and of her Council, a delightful week was spent, and Yorkshire hostesses vied with each other in the entertainment of their fellow-members from all parts. Mrs. Sumner, ever young, bore the strain of the many services and meetings as well as any of her fellow-workers and remained fresh and enthusiastic throughout all the week's proceedings.

The Central Council met on June 5th in St. William's College by the kind permission of the Archbishop. His Grace in his Cathedral sermon spoke serious words upon this occasion which it may be well to quote:—"It is my conviction, founded on personal experience, that the Mothers' Union has a definite and national work to do." Very gravely and unflinchingly His Grace indicated the social problems which the Mothers' Union must not ignore and especially "The avoidance of sacrifice which resulted in a declining birth-rate." "The time has come," His Grace added, "when the Mothers' Union is entitled to look to the Bishops for guidance, and I hope if they ask for it they will not ask in vain."

At this Council, held in York, two important developments with regard to the literature of the Mothers' Union were decided upon. (1) A Monthly Magazine for Workers was to be launched in January 1914—this is now known all over the world as *The Workers' Paper*—and (2) Mrs. George Chitty was appointed Correspondent of the new Mothers' Union Religious Education Scheme, in connection with which a Book Supply was to be organised under the superintendence of Mrs. Rowland Barker.

In December 1913 Miss Marcia Tucker was appointed Editor of the *Workers' Paper* and two additional offices were secured in the Church House, one to provide room for the Library and Book Supply and for the use of the

new Editor, the second for Mothers' Union literature and publications and for the use of the Financial Clerk. Mrs. F. S. Boas was at this time appointed Central Correspondent for Literature, a post which she still (1921) most ably fills.

At the December Council the President reminded its members of the Archbishop's counsel at York, and she was authorised to send the following letter to every Bishop at home and overseas:—

"My Lord Bishop,

On behalf of the Central Council of the Mothers' Union, I beg to submit to your Lordship the following resolution passed at the Central Council held at the Church House on December 4th, 1913:—

> 'The Central Council of the Mothers' Union recognising that certain present customs of limiting the family are contrary to the Divine Law and hostile to the best interests of the nation, appeals to the Bishops for guidance in disseminating the Christian principle which forbids such avoidance of parenthood and for directions in educating public opinion against this great evil.'

It is a formal outcome of long thought and prayer on the need of action in opposition to the great and growing evil of artificial restriction of families, an evil which affects and gives rise to much perplexity among conscientious and devout people. The first object of the Mothers' Union is to maintain the reverent use of the married state, and therefore we accept the obligation to help in resisting the increasing decline of the English birth-rate, yet we consider that until some principle of action is defined by the authority of the Church, and until we are called by our leaders to co-operate, we cannot wisely go forward with any suggestion for ameliorating this danger to our national life.

Asking your gracious consideration of our appeal and waiting your guidance in the endeavour to build up a healthy public opinion.

I beg to subscribe myself,

Your Lordship's obedient servant,

(Signed) A. CHICHESTER,

Central President."

As some of these letters had to go to the Antipodes and to the remotest dioceses, some months elapsed before answers were received, and they numbered forty-eight. The Archbishops signified their approval. Many Bishops did not feel able to return very definite replies, and some said that this question had been and would be again before a sub-committee of Bishops. One Bishop considered it a matter of sufficient importance to go before "The United Episcopate." It may therefore humbly be claimed by the Mothers' Union that the appeal made in 1913—1914 did most directly influence the Resolution passed by "The United Episcopate" at the Lambeth Conference of 1920.

1914.

In June, 1914, Working Women Delegates from four dioceses attended the Conference Service at St. Paul's Cathedral. This system of "Delegates" has now (1921) ripened into a comprehensive "Representation Scheme," whereby every Diocesan Council may send three representatives to the Central Council—President, Secretary and *one Industrial Member*.

The Literature Committee was busy this year with the Inauguration of the Religious Education Scheme and its Book Supply (so largely due to the initiative of Mrs. Rowland Barker).

The *Official Handbook* was prepared this year for its first issue in 1915; the *Workers' Paper* made its appearance; leaflets on Moral Instruction were provided by request; and, in response to an offer made by the "White Star" and "Cunard" Shipping Companies, literature for the use of emigrants on liners was provided by the Mothers' Union. Miss Tucker found herself obliged to resign her post as Editor of the *Workers' Paper* in the Autumn of 1914, and Mrs. Beaumaris Woodward was appointed Editor and still holds the office.

Support was given by the Central Council to the Bishop

of London's new "Criminal Law Amendment Bill," and "Resolutions" upon it were sent to both Houses of Parliament.

The work Overseas was well co-ordinated by giving new powers to the Overseas Committee at Headquarters; Provincial Councils for Overseas countries were discussed and their scope defined; many new grants were made to Bishops in Missionary dioceses for the work of the Mothers' Union; a worker was sent out to Calgary, Western Canada, for some months, and a beautiful banner was received from native members in Madagascar, woven, designed and worked by their own hands.

The opening months of the Great War called for much new effort on the part of the Mothers' Union at Headquarters. The increase of drinking among women, the position of unmarried mothers, the formation of the League of Honour for girls and young women and the relationship of the Mothers' Union towards it, Women Patrols, the Professional Classes' War Relief Council and its Maternity Homes—all these matters required close attention, and arrangements were made to enable Mothers' Union members to take their part in the proposed day of National Prayer and Intercession, January 3rd, 1915.

1915.

The outstanding events of this year within the Mothers' Union were six in number. First, the Buttress Fund of 1911–12 had been so well supported by Mothers' Union members that some £1200 had been gathered in—enough to pay for two Buttresses with £250 to spare. This £250 was handed over by Mrs. Sumner to the Central Council for the promotion of Mothers' Union work Overseas.

The second event was a sad one. Canon Nash, the good friend of the Mothers' Union and Editor of *Mothers*

in Council, died in June. The July number of *Mothers in Council* was in print and Canon Vaughan, of Winchester, kindly undertook to produce the October number, while the question of a new Editor was under consideration. Eventually it was decided to publish *Mothers in Council* as well as the *Workers' Paper* from Headquarters and Mrs. Woodward was appointed Editor of both magazines.

The third event was one which gave great satisfaction; namely, the fusion of the Chichester Diocesan Mothers' Guild with the Mothers' Union, to the strengthening of both organisations.

Fourthly, a "Speakers' Committee" was formed and soon became a very important factor in the Central Organisation of the Mothers' Union—the Hon. Mrs. Gell and Mrs. Wyndham Knight Bruce being its efficient and inspiring leaders

The fifth event was a Conference arranged between members of the Mothers' Union and members of the Headmistresses' Association with a view to co-operation in religious training of girls, and the sixth point to notice is the inauguration of the Pilgrim Movement among women, which had its birth within the Mothers' Union at one of its Executive Committees in the summer of 1914,

The Society of the Pilgrimage of Prayer was formed and this soon had its own and separate organisation, but it is a satisfaction to be able to reflect that it originated within the Mothers' Union and that the first group of Pilgrims were mainly Mothers' Union Workers, as is still to a considerable extent the case.

The Watch Committee during 1915 concerned itself with many important matters and made its influence widely felt. Mrs. John Clay, Mrs. Cecil Hook, Mrs. James Gow are names which must never be forgotten in this connection, while the mainspring of their inspiration was found in the Central President's passionate enthusiasm

in the cause of national purity. Criminal assaults on children and indecent advertisements, postcards, etc., were attacked with courage, and no little good resulted, although more remains to be accomplished.

Lady Horatia Erskine had a long and severe illness in 1915, which unfortunately resulted in her being obliged to discontinue her attendance at the Council and Committee Meetings. Her interest in all that concerns the Mothers' Union has, nevertheless, continued unabated, and was fully shared by her husband, Sir David Erskine, as long as his health permitted.

It came as a bolt from the blue when Lady Chichester announced by letter in January 1916, that home claims demanded her retirement from a post of so much responsibility as that of President of the Mothers' Union. Her decision could only be accepted with the great regret of every member of the Central Council and it was decided to call an Emergency Meeting of the Council in February 1916, in order to receive formally Lady Chichester's resignation and to elect her successor.

Emily S. Richards
Central President

Chapter IV

1916—1917.

Central President:

Mrs. Wilberforce.

WHEN the Central Council met in February 1916, for the sole purpose of appointing a new President, its members with one accord elected Mrs. Ernest Wilberforce, who at that time had been presiding over the Mothers' Union in the Diocese of London for over seven years.

There was little necessity for the usual formalities of so august a proceeding as a Presidential Election, for no fewer than forty nominations had been received for Mrs. Wilberforce and she was, therefore, unanimously acclaimed Central President by a show of hands.

Mrs. Wilberforce's act of self-surrender in consenting to stand for election at such a time as the second year of the Great War was characteristic of the unsparing way in which she ever subordinated personal inclination to the call of duty. It was abundantly evident that she, above all others, was uniquely fitted for the position of leader in the Mothers' Union at that time. As Miss Emily Connor—daughter of Canon Connor, Vicar of Newport, Isle of Wight, and afterwards Dean of Windsor and Domestic Chaplain to Queen Victoria—she was married in 1874 to the Rev. Ernest Wilberforce, afterwards Bishop first of Newcastle and then of Chichester, and at that time Vicar of Seaforth, in Lancashire. Until the Bishop's death, in 1907, Mrs. Wilberforce had joined heart and

soul with him in his many-sided work, which often included the championing of unpopular causes among people whose enthusiasm it was hard to stir. It is good to be able to record that their united work for the Mothers' Union was always an inspiration and a joy to them both, and it must be gratefully remembered that had not Bishop Wilberforce (then of Newcastle) prevailed upon Mrs. Sumner to address the Church Congress at Portsmouth in 1885, there might never have been the Mothers' Union as it is known and loved to-day.

In 1916 Mrs. Wilberforce, with her three sons and two sons-in-law on active service, was full of anxiety and home cares. But the call came and, as there was no denying its insistence, she nobly consented to " carry on " the work as Central President until the next Triennial Elections, which were due in 1917.

The first Central Council presided over by the new President was that of June 6th, 1916. The occasion is never likely to be forgotten by those present as the news of the loss of the *Hampshire* and the death of Lord Kitchener came as an almost stunning blow in the midst of the Council's deliberations.

Nevertheless important decisions were made on this eventful day.

The following Message to the Women of France was drafted by the Council and despatched from the Annual Conference held the same week:—

" WE, as representing Members of the Mothers' Union in all parts of Great Britain and Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, India, West Indies, Western Equatorial Africa, Uganda, Newfoundland and Bermuda, Gibraltar and Cairo, also in China, Japan, Madagascar and the Falkland Islands, desire to extend our sisterly sympathy to the Wives, the Mothers and the Daughters of France. The suffering which you have endured at the hands of a relentless foe have aroused in our hearts the profoundest emotion of horror and indignation,

"We, too, have suffered in this terrible war: we have, like you, given of our best and bravest as a sacrifice in the cause of Liberty and Justice. Unlike you, we have not, so far, had the grief of seeing our country's soil profaned by the foot of the invader. But the invincible courage with which you have borne these misfortunes has enriched the world through a patriotism which counts personal ease, safety, and life itself as dust in the scale when weighed against the welfare and the integrity of France, while you are setting an example of fearless devotion to duty which calls forth our highest admiration and deepest affectionate sympathy. This is the spirit to ensure the victory which we pray by the mercy of God may not be long delayed."

The important event of June 6th, 1916, as concerning the whole future work of the Mothers' Union was the inception of the Mary Sumner House Scheme. This proposal did not come before the Council on this occasion for discussion. The President called a special meeting of Diocesan Presidents at the conclusion of the Council Meeting to ask for their co-operation in a plan whereby the world-wide work of the Mothers' Union might be still further strengthened and co-ordinated at its Centre.

The main point in the scheme was the building and endowment of a Central House which should be established in Westminster as a Memorial of the life work of the Foundress of the Mothers' Union and which should bear her honoured name. Mrs. Sumner, who had been already consulted, was deeply appreciative and ready to give the whole matter her blessing and her prayers, though she hardly expected at her advanced age to see the House in being. The Diocesan Presidents not only expressed general approval of the plan, but empowered the Executive Committee to proceed with it, should occasion arise, before the next meeting of the Council.

Circumstances hastened events to a degree never at first anticipated. A great wave of desire to save and

guard the child-life of the nation flooded the country during the next two months. It found expression in the cry: "Save the Children." The Press resounded with it, and every organisation which directly or indirectly felt itself responsible, rose to fresh effort and put forth more power. It was not possible for the Mothers' Union to stand aside and take no active part in this national movement. Its leaders felt that the greatest Society for mothers that the world had ever known must do its part and on its own approved lines. Workers must be trained by the Mothers' Union to help the mothers of the land to become more capable of rearing and training a fine generation of children in the faith and fear of God and in the knowledge of His laws and the works of His Commandments.

The Central President felt strongly that no longer could the Mothers' Union contemplate its "House" as a vision of the future, but its leaders must endeavour to bring it without delay into the realm of solid fact. Many people of influence, experience and business ability urged the President to act promptly in the face of the great opportunity that offered.

An appeal for £50,000 was therefore issued, and, while it was hoped a large proportion of this would be made up of small sums from the 400,000 members, yet it was also thought advisable to interest a wider public by the insertion of a letter in *The Times* and other papers.

A copy of the letter was sent to the Queen's lady-in-waiting, who laid it before Her Majesty. A gracious and encouraging reply was received, expressing Queen Mary's high approval of the proposal and her hope that it would be carried out with very great success.

A "Building Fund" was accordingly opened for the "Mary Sumner House," and on December 6th, 1916, the Central Council unanimously ratified their approval, already given informally, in the following Resolution:—

"That the Mothers' Union shall acquire such premises as funds permit for the 'Mary Sumner House,' which shall be the Central Institute for Mothers' Union work, and shall comprise the Mothers' Union Offices, a Chapel, Library, rooms for Meetings, Lectures, and Model Classes.

"That the training of Workers for spiritual and physical instruction shall be undertaken, and also the study of Child Welfare and Mothercraft in co-operation with recognised Infant Welfare Centres."

1917.

It was agreed that the Triennial Elections, due this year, must be postponed until the end of the War, and all those who held office were asked to carry on their work to the best of their ability. Led by the Central President, all Presidents and Members of Committees, etc., did endeavour most loyally to serve the Mothers' Union during these trying years.

The Mothers' Union threw its influence into various departments of war service and associated itself with the National War Savings Committee, the Economy Campaign organised by the Ministry of Food and with every right and wise effort made in the cause of national purity. Miss Soulsby attended, as an Associate and representative of the Mothers' Union, the International Congress of the World's Purity Federation, held at Kentucky, U.S.A., in November 1917.

The increase of drinking among women called for renewed effort in the cause of temperance and the Mothers' Union appointed Mrs. Russell Walker to the post of Central Correspondent for Temperance Work. Mrs. Russell Walker has thrown herself into the work with the enthusiasm and ability of her father, Bishop Ernest Wilberforce, and has so increased it by good organisation that there is likely to be, before long, a Mothers' Union Temperance Correspondent in communication with Mrs. Russell Walker in every diocese.

Before leaving subjects connected with war conditions in 1917, mention must be made of a protest sent by the Mothers' Union to both Houses of Parliament with regard to the use of the expression "unmarried *wives*." It was pointed out that this wrong use of a word held sacred by millions of men and women in the country was not only offensive to married people but degrading to the institution of marriage, even apart from its definitely religious conception. It may be said here that a similar protest is being made at the present time (November 1921), as the expression is again in Government use in connexion with out-of-work relief.

A Provisional Committee for Marriage Defence was formed in October 1917, to arouse the country to the danger of the Matrimonial Causes Bill, drafted by the Divorce Law Reform Union, which made three years of separation a ground for divorce.

This Bill was eventually withdrawn, but others of a similar nature have been before both Houses of Parliament and yet another is shortly to be expected. The Marriage Defence Council is still active in opposing all destructive legislation regarding marriage and although it has had now, for some years, its own offices and scope of work, it is satisfactory to contemplate that its first meetings were convened by and held in the offices of the Mothers' Union.

By the President's great wish, a Young Wives' Central Committee was formed during this year to further the work of the Mothers' Union among young mothers, and young wives without children. A Conference of Young Wives, arranged by this Committee, met, by the kind invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mrs. Davidson, at Lambeth Palace in December 1917. The Conference lasted three days and its result was the formation within the Mothers' Union of the "Young

Wives' Fellowship," under the leadership of Mrs. Lionel Ford and Lady Fletcher.

The Fellowship soon attracted many to its meetings and conferences who found themselves unable to accept entirely the foundation principles of the Mothers' Union, and in order to gather in this wider circle of young motherhood the leaders of the Fellowship decided eventually to work independently of the Mothers' Union while remaining in close touch with its Council and Committees in every diocese. This departure did not actually take place until 1920; the "Fellowship" is now known as the "Wives' Fellowship," and its members are young married women of education and leisure, whose problems include those of the nursery and schoolroom. The original Young Wives' Committee remains in the Mothers' Union to carry on the work for which it was appointed, namely, the furtherance of Mothers' Union ideals and principles among young wives and mothers in every walk of life, without distinction of circumstance.

It is noteworthy that during this same year the sympathies of the Mothers' Union were extended to the Girl Guide movement—in the hope that the Guide Companies of to-day were providing a wide and sound training for the wives and mothers of to-morrow.

The outstanding event of 1917 need only be lightly touched upon here as it appears in the first part of this book. In June 1917 the temporary "Mary Sumner House" was opened by H.R.H. Princess Christian and dedicated by the Bishop of London. No. 8, Dean's Yard, a house adjoining and belonging to the Church House, became vacant unexpectedly and was offered to the Mothers' Union on a short tenancy. The House has proved an admirable temporary home for the offices of the Mothers' Union and provides a Library, Lecture Room, Committee Room and Chapel—all on a small

scale and now fast becoming inadequate to the work carried on there.

The Rev. Gordon Savile, Secretary to the Church of England Men's Society, was invited to become Chaplain to the Mary Sumner House. Celebrations of the Holy Communion take place at regular intervals in the Chapel; prayers are read every day and a special service of devotion and intercession with a short address is held at noon each Friday. The Mothers' Union is indebted to Mr. Savile and to many other clergy for kindness in taking the Chapel services and giving addresses to workers.

Two Overseas matters of interest come into this eventful year. A magazine for Australian members of the Mothers' Union was started in Sydney Diocese, under the able Editorship of Mrs. Pattinson. *Mothers in Australia* soon gained a large circulation and it now finds its way into every Australian diocese. Many members, however, especially those not long from the home country, still take the *Mothers' Union Journal.*

New Zealand, ever generous and loyal, sent from Mothers' Union members a collection of £268 for the relief of their suffering fellow-sisters in the devastated areas of France and Serbia. This splendid gift, the result of a self-denial effort, was expended in exactly the way desired, and many a homeless mother with a child coming, or in arms, was helped by the loving self-sacrifice of the New Zealand women. Touching presents of money came also from native and coloured members in South Africa for fellow-members at home, to convey, in the gift-language understood of the child-races, their sympathy for white mothers in the bereavements of war. Thus were members of the Mothers' Union being daily more closely enfolded together in the robe woven of sympathy, and jewelled with loving thoughts and prayers.

Chapter V

1918—1920.

Central President:
Mrs. Wilberforce.

1918.

THE June Council opened in sorrow. The Central President was unable to be present owing to the sudden death, the result of a flying accident, of her son, Captain William Wilberforce, M.C., The Hon. Mrs. Evelyn Hubbard (Vice-President) presided, and the Council stood in silent prayer for their President and her family in their great bereavement. A cross of flowers was sent to the funeral, which was to take place on the next day, as an expression of their deep sympathy.

The Naval Division of the Mothers' Union, organised somewhat on the lines of the Army Division, was inaugurated this year, and the work made a good start at Chatham. The hope that a special branch for the wives of sailors will be established in each naval seaport town seems now likely to be fulfilled. During the war the matter was not easy to organise.

The Army Division during the war lost many members owing to the soldiers' wives being dispersed all over the country while the men were at the front. Both the Army and the Naval Division are however re-organising hopefully at the present time.

In 1918, during a tour made in Devon and Cornwall, the Central President was much impressed with the need felt by Branch workers, far from the Centre, for help in organising their work. Several "Organising

Workers " were, therefore, appointed by the Central Council to travel when invited in the dioceses in order to meet Presiding and Enrolling Members and re-invigorate work that had waned or lapsed through lack of encouragement. Six experienced " Organisers " were soon making tours and were greatly appreciated, especially in country places. This branch of work still continues, and more use might be made of the excellent help that is at the disposal of the dioceses.

It was during Mrs. Wilberforce's administration that the last two home Diocesan Councils to accept the revised Constitution became affiliated to the Incorporated Mothers' Union, and so, in 1918, to the great satisfaction of the Central Council, the home organisation thus became complete.

A third Missionary Worker Overseas was adopted in 1918 by the Mothers' Union, in addition to those in Tinnevelly and Travancore. Miss Gibson, of the C.E.Z.M.S., was appointed to work specially for the Mothers' Union in the Punjab (Lahore Diocese). Miss Gibson endeared herself and her work to many hundreds of Mothers' Union members during her furlough in England—a time that was much prolonged owing, unfortunately, to her illness. Meanwhile the C.E.Z.M.S. suggested that the support of the Mothers' Union should be transferred to a Missionary in China, and Miss Loader is now its third worker in the Mission Field. Miss Loader has had long experience in Mothers' Union work among the Christian Chinese women in Fuh-Kien Diocese, and is greatly beloved by them. Miss Gibson has at last (1921) been able to return to Lahore Diocese, and she will work for the Mothers' Union on all possible occasions, although no longer definitely a M.U. Missionary Worker.

In December, 1918, the Mothers' Union undertook an enquiry among its members to collect evidence and

opinions upon the question of the Declining Birth Rate, its causes and remedies, thereby desiring to draw out a clear view of that which is intended in the first and second clauses of the Preface to the Office for the Solemnization of Matrimony, and to help in forming a worthy public opinion on the right and wrong use of the marriage state.

1919.

It was a matter of great regret to the whole Mothers' Union that Lady Jenkyns, who had founded and edited for thirty-one years the *Mothers' Union Journal*, felt obliged to resign her work. As the President truly said, it was impossible to overestimate Lady Jenkyns' work for the Mothers' Union—" possibly only second in value to that of Mrs. Sumner herself." A new editor had to be found, equal to the management, both literary and financial, of a large undertaking. Mrs. Carruthers, an experienced editor of some standing, a Mothers' Union Speaker and a member of its Literature Committee, was appointed.

All three Magazines were handed over to the S.P.C.K. this year for publication, but, in 1921, it was found more practical to publish the *Workers' Paper* from the Central Office and to circulate it from there.

The subject of the Declining Birth Rate again came before the Council, and in June, 1919, the following principle was agreed to:—

> "That as for all normal married persons it is a duty and an honour to accept God's gift of a family, we hold that a selfish limitation of children is wrong, and that all artificial checks to conception are against the law of nature and of God."

The Central President communicated with the Archbishops and Diocesan Bishops at home and overseas in

April, 1919, and again in February, 1920, with the hope that further consideration to the principle at issue might be given at the Lambeth Conference in 1920.

The splendid and self-sacrificing work of Mrs. John Clay in connexion with this subject of Birth Control must never be forgotten. The tribute paid to that work by one of the Bishops, at the time of the Lambeth Conference (1920), may well be recorded here; namely, that not only had Mrs. Clay's efforts borne fruit within the Mothers' Union but that the whole Church might well acknowledge to her a debt of gratitude.

On February 15th, 1919, the Queen, accompanied by the Princess Mary, most graciously paid a visit to the Mary Sumner House. The notice given to the Central President was very short, but as many members of the Central Council as could be communicated with in the time were present to meet Her Majesty and the Princess. The Queen showed the greatest interest in all that she saw, and examined the appointments of the Chapel, particularly the banner woven, designed and worked by the native members in Madagascar. The Literature and Overseas Departments specially held the attention of Her Majesty, and the kind words spoken to each member of the Staff by the Queen and the Princess will never be forgotten. Her Majesty and the Princess each signed her photograph and the visitors' book, and shortly afterwards a parcel of sixteen books for children arrived as a gift from the Queen to the Library,

The elections, postponed from 1917, took place in June 1919. Mrs. Randall Davidson announced at the Central Council Meeting that everything possible had been done to find a worthy successor to Mrs. Wilberforce, who was greatly in need of rest, but no one felt able to undertake the arduous office of Central President. Once more Mrs. Wilberforce most generously consented to

put aside her own inclinations and to remain as Central President for another year.

Now that the years of war had ended it seemed the moment for the Mothers' Union to look into its innermost workings, and to revive its membership by a missionary effort which would reach every individual member. The movement took shape as the "Campaign for Deepening Spiritual Life within the Mothers' Union." During the autumn and winter of 1919 and the spring of 1920, week by week, each Branch called itself to account. Special services and prayer meetings were arranged and in most cases an appointed worker—sometimes two or more—visited the branches and conducted a mission, calling upon every member in her own home.

The effect of the Campaign is abundantly recognised though it can hardly be expressed in words. In quantity membership decreased, utterly unresponsive members or those whose membership was on paper only being removed from the Branch rolls, but the gain in quality was immeasurable. Many lapsed branches revived, numbers of new branches were started, weak members were strengthened and new developments of the spiritual side of Mothers' Union work came into being. A solemn "Renewal of Membership" generally concluded each "Campaign Week," and many members for the first time were helped to understand the principles to which they had pledged their adherence, and—in the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury—to make the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ a "glowing reality" in their homes. After the earthquake and fire of war—the "still small voice." Such was the "Campaign." Its results rest with God.

The Finances of the Mothers' Union had during the years of War been a cause of anxiety, and had the War continued another year it is probable that almost insur-

mountable difficulties would have presented themselves. The increased cost of paper, publishing and labour was reducing the profits on the magazines and publications to a vanishing point, and on these profits the Society depended as its main source of income. It was plain at last that a more stable source of income must be found. The Council was asked to pass a scheme of finance whereby every member in the Mothers' Union should be required to pay a yearly tribute of sixpence, one penny of which should be sent to the Central Fund. This penny per head per member was to supersede the existing Diocesan Tribute of 2*s.* per Branch.

The scheme was passed and came into operation in January 1920. Although it was hardly expected to work entirely smoothly during the first year, the result exceeded all expectations and almost reached the estimated possible amount. Members proved themselves not only willing but keenly desirous of sharing in the support of their "Union," and the fivepence per head left in each diocese is helping the diocesan and branch funds to meet their many claims. No longer is there any cleavage in the Mothers' Union between "Subscribing" and "Non-subscribing" Members. Every one subscribes to the extent of sixpence a year, and those who have received ability to do more, give of their means with readiness. The "Tribute" is gradually becoming recognised as yet another unifying force in the Mothers' Union—one not unworthy to be ranked with the spirit of fellowship evoked by the War and the influence of the Spiritual Campaign.

1920.

The last Council presided over by Mrs. Wilberforce was that of June 22nd, 1920, and the Dowager Countess of Chichester, on behalf of the Council, expressed the gratitude and appreciation extended by all to the President,

who had so admirably directed the Mothers' Union during the past four and a half exceptionally difficult years.

Mrs. Wilberforce was asked to accept two small offerings as a token of affection and esteem—a miniature of her son, the late Captain William Wilberforce, and a little fitted dressing-case. The President responded in a moving speech, thanking all who had worked with her for their loyal support and affection, and she commended to them the unfinished work to which the Mothers' Union had put its hand—the permanent "Mary Sumner House." The President also announced that Mrs. Hubert Barclay, Diocesan President of St. Albans, had been elected to succeed her and would take office in the autumn. Mrs. Wilberforce was asked to become a Vice-President, as was also the Dowager Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava on her retirement as General President for the Mothers' Union in Ireland.

A scheme for wider representation was passed at this Council—which operates from the humble Branch Committee throughout the various Deanery Committees and Diocesan Councils up to the Central Council itself. The effect on the latter has been to increase its numbers, as each diocese may now have three Representatives, the President, Diocesan Secretary and an Industrial Member.* Incorporated Members may now send Twenty-five Elected Members to the Council and may vote for them, at the time of election, *by post* if unable to be present at the General Meeting that year.

On June 24th, 1920, the second Mass Meeting of the Mothers' Union was held in the Albert Hall, Kensington. The great building was filled with members and gay with colour, each branch bringing its own small banner and many dioceses a large and handsome standard. A protest against any further facilities for divorce being recognised by Parliament was sent by the ten thousand

* See page 133.

women present. Mrs. Wilberforce presided and the Bishops of St. Albans (Dr. Michael Furse) and of Willochra (Dr. Gilbert White) addressed the Meeting. Madame Carrie Tubb brought tears to the eyes of most women present by her exquisite singing of "Home Sweet Home." A choir of 1000 voices (all M.U. members) had been trained by the Hon. Mrs. Gell, and the rendering of the hymns and choruses was most effective.

Another far-reaching event of this summer was the Conference of Overseas Workers, held in July. For one week over 100 workers in the Mothers' Union from all parts of the world, assembled together at a house in London (kindly lent for the occasion) for devotion and conference. The Lambeth Conference had brought many Bishops' wives from Overseas to England, who were Diocesan Presidents in their own sphere of work. Many other Overseas workers came specially to England for this Mothers' Union Conference and the occasion was unique.

It was a matter of regret that, owing to illness, Mrs. Wilberforce could only meet the delegates on the first and last day of the five. Mrs. Montgomery, the Countess of Harrowby, and Mrs. Harmer were all, in turn, admirable in the Chair, and Mrs. Hubert Barclay, so soon to take office as Central President, attended every meeting and endeavoured to become personally acquainted with each delegate. The Rev. M. Conran, S.S.J., acted as Chaplain of the Conference and conducted the Quiet Day which opened its proceedings. The keen discussions emphasised the fact that the needs and problems of motherhood are fundamentally the same all over the wide world, and for that reason the Mothers' Union is able to make its message understood by wives and mothers of every age and rank and race and clime.

E. Noël Barclay

Chapter VI

1920—1921.

Central President:
Mrs. Hubert Barclay.

MRS. HUBERT BARCLAY'S first appointment in the Mothers' Union was that of Enrolling Member for the parish of Essendon, in Hertfordshire. Her power as a speaker and her grasp of organisation soon gained her a place on the Mothers' Union Council in St. Albans Diocese and in 1919 she became its President.

During the War Mrs. Barclay had visited many of the great Y.M.C.A. Camps in the South of England and addressed large meetings of soldiers. Her gifts of leadership are largely inherited from her father, Colonel Henry Smith Daniell, who fought in the Indian Mutiny and who, later on, was Chief of the Bombay Police and afterwards, for many years, Chief Constable for Hertfordshire.

Miss Edith Noël Daniell married in 1890 Hubert Frederick Barclay, a direct descendant of Robert Barclay, of Urie Castle, Aberdeenshire, the famous apologist for the Friends in the time of Charles II. The second of Colonel and Mrs. Hubert Barclay's three sons fell in the Great War; thus was the present Central President as well as her two predecessors given a direct entry into the heart of bereaved motherhood throughout the Empire.

To Mrs. Barclay's talent as an artist the 1922 Almanac will testify; the kindness which inspired her to devote several weeks to patient work in Westminster Abbey,

in order that the mothers of unknown heroes should have their own picture of the Warrior's Grave, will be as universally appreciated as the picture itself.

The new Central President's first Council was that of December 1st and 2nd, 1920. Its chief feature was the issue of a statement clearly defining the "Sanctity of Marriage," as understood by the Mothers' Union ever since its foundation as a Church Society.

Mrs. Gore Browne, speaking for her mother, Mrs. Sumner, testified that the Foundress always understood the word "Sanctity" to include indissolubility.

In view of the more varied interpretations of the present day the Council passed a resolution, defining the meaning of the First Object in the following words:—

"To uphold the sanctity of marriage as a life-long and indissoluble union, for better for worse, of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side."

1921.

The June Conference Week at Chester is so fresh a memory to all privileged to enjoy its varied programme that it is only necessary to record anew with gratitude and deep appreciation the kindness of the Bishop and the Dean, the perfection of the arrangements made by the Chester Diocesan Council and by its President, Mrs. W. H. Johnson, and the abounding hospitality that Chester bestowed on the four hundred invaders within its walls.

On June 26th, the occasion of their diamond wedding, Sir David and Lady Horatia Erskine were sent a telegram conveying the hearty congratulations of the Central Council. A few months later, on September 7th, Sir David Erskine, always a faithful friend of the Mothers' Union, passed into the Life Beyond.

As the events surrounding another Passing, that of the beloved Foundress, have been fully and lovingly described in the first part of this book, it only remains for the History to record that Mrs. Sumner was called to her rest on August 11th, 1921, and that the funeral took place at Winchester on August 15th.

Many important matters are engaging the attention of the Mothers' Union at the present time, all of which call for earnest thought and prayer, to be followed by wise, concerted action. The danger to young people lurking in the modern cinema can only be overcome by the establishment of better class picture houses with attractive films of wholesome character, and by legislation which will protect lads and girls from suggestive and low-toned picture stories, and from conditions within the palaces which make for unseemly behaviour.

A still more hideous danger to "Christ's little ones" is the terrible and blasphemous teaching given in anti-Christian Sunday Schools. The Campaign against this evil in our midst can only be fought under the direction of the Spirit of "wisdom, counsel and ghostly strength"—for its insidiousness makes an open attack upon it well-nigh impossible. All that will be required of the Mothers' Union during 1922 cannot be known beforehand, but it is fully recognised by the Central Council that its forces must be rallied to save Christ's fold from the wolves that are packing to destroy first the lambs and then the flock.

Yet another Mass Meeting for Mothers was held in London during the autumn of 1921—this time in the Queen's Hall, Langham Place. Addresses were given on Courtship, Marriage and Motherhood, and each subject was handled quite fearlessly, yet raised to a height which touched the sublime.

In an age when a low ideal and much false teaching

with regard to sex relationship is being put forth in every section of the community as part of a gospel of individualism, it behoves the Mothers' Union to offer a clear statement of the purposes of God for mankind, as revealed in the Bible and in the history of the human race, to the parents of to-day and of to-morrow.

And so—in days full of grievous anxiety but nevertheless of glorious hope and boundless opportunities—these opening chapters of the History of the Mothers' Union are brought to an end. That history is but begun. In words recently spoken by the present Central President: "We will go forward as a Union in the highest and best meaning of that word—in unity of prayer, unity of service, unity of sympathy, and unity of heart-felt enthusiasm—viewing every problem of the present and future in the light of Christ's teaching—believing, humbly but confidently, that God has still a great work for us to do—work for which we must ever be ready and prepared, as the instrument in His hand to be used for His purpose."

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MARY SUMNER, HER LIFE AND WORK

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